

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

AN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAITH DEVELOPMENT MODEL OF JAMES  
FOWLER IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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### Abstract.

A vacuum has arisen for many teachers of Religious Education in South Africa with the demise of Christian National Education as a guiding rationale for the teaching of the subject. Many teachers have come to question CNE's emphasis on the transmission of content and the importance of the teacher. The child, many believe, has not been given his or her proper due. Teachers have also realised the inadequacy of CNE as a means of addressing the multi-faith nature of RE classes. The debate concerning the future of RE has centred around the need to meet the demands of educational rather than religious considerations. It has also been focused on the rationale behind the teaching of the subject. The question of appropriate methodologies has, by and large, been ignored.

The imperative of devising an RE that is sound educationally as well as one that is able to address the needs of all the shades of belief that are found in most RE classes has made the work of the developmentalist James Fowler particularly apposite. He has constructed a stage model that, he believes, describes the progression of faith or meaning through which individuals travel. During all the stages the modes of meaning-making follow a predictable pattern. These modes are universal in their application and are independent of the content of the belief system in which they are grounded, whether this be religious or non-religious. The teacher using such a model is therefore able to engage everyone in an RE class.

The research component of this study has sought to ascertain the degree of acceptance of the model among teachers of RE in the belief that an understanding of some of their attitudes, tacitly held or otherwise, could facilitate teacher utilisation of the model. Merely having been exposed to the model could also facilitate its use. For many teachers RE is an extension of their personal belief and as such is sensitive and perhaps not something on which they readily reflect. An analysis of answers to the questionnaires that were administered and of the interviews that were given by teachers lays bare some of their attitudes to the model.

This study concludes by addressing the major problems of teacher attitude to the model that are revealed by the empirical data. The data and the theory are used to make some recommendations for a guiding methodology for RE that is based on Fowler's model.



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## CHAPTER 1

1. A rationale for the study of teachers' perceptions of a stage model of the development of faith.

### 1.1 Introduction.

Religious Education in South Africa is at a crossroads. Christian National Education (CNE) is dead but it is unclear what is going to replace it, though the issue of appropriate methodologies will have to be dealt with, whatever the form of the replacement for CNE. This thesis will concentrate on exploring in detail one methodology for the teaching of a new type of RE. This methodology which will be discussed succeeds on a practical level in answering some of the most important criticisms that have been levelled at CNE on a philosophical level, particularly with regard to the status of the child in the pedagogic process. This methodology rests on the assumption that growth in faith follows a predictable, stage-like progression, which permits teaching to be adjusted to the modes of meaning-making that characterize each stage. The recommendations accompanying a description of this methodology will rest in part on an assessment of teachers' attitudes to its value, particularly since the use of stage theory may be perceived as infringing on what is considered as properly the domain of God.

Part of this chapter will consist of a description of those criticisms of the rationale on which CNE was based. This will be followed by descriptions of some new approaches to RE that have sought to provide an alternative to CNE.

### 1.2 Christian National Education: the need for a replacement.

With the demise of the influence of CNE on Religious Education in South Africa a number of different approaches have been

suggested as possibly being appropriate to schooling in the new South Africa. All have rejected the major philosophical presuppositions and implications which characterized CNE. Three of them will be briefly described below since they raise important issues which the present author believes need to be addressed when the future of Religious Education as an academic discipline in this country is debated. It will be briefly explained why these presuppositions have in recent times been rejected on educational as well as on moral grounds. This study will then, particularly in the last chapter, proceed to suggest ways in which these issues may suitably be addressed, especially the need for an appropriate methodology. It will be argued that such a methodology should be driven by the educational needs of the child and not by the desire to communicate a particular content if RE is to receive acceptance in the educational community as a legitimate part of any curriculum.

Gluckman (1981) is one critic who has addressed himself to the shortcomings of CNE as a philosophic system which has underpinned RE in South Africa's recent past. His refutation of the first of these philosophical presuppositions proceeds from his claim that CNE was founded on an acceptance of the phenomenological method (1981:107). Use of this method, prominent CNE educators of the past such as Oberholzer (1973:18) have claimed enable one to arrive at knowledge that is characterized by disinterestedness, objectivity and lack of bias. These are qualities, they believed, which endowed this method with the ability to reveal knowledge that, by virtue of its permanence, was similar to scientific knowledge. Such a belief from an educational perspective in facts that are virtually unalterable is reinforced from a religious perspective when according to Gluckman (1981:108), the role of the Calvinist base of CNE is considered. In this system absolute values are believed to be given by God to humanity through the Bible. Other prominent CNE educators such as

Viljoen and Pienaar (1971:91) have claimed that Biblical information ceases to be subjective because it attains the certainty that accompanies factual information. The important role assigned to the transmission of Biblical content in CNE is known to various authors such as Staples (1984) as Bible-centred education. Given the assumption of divine origin the importance assigned to content is therefore understandable but still not acceptable to the many educationists who are either not Christians or who do not share the view of Biblical authority held by the majority of Christian National Educators.

Furthermore, since the facts contained in the Bible are given by God, no discussion or exchange of ideas concerning their validity is necessary. It must be stated though, in the last five to ten years, I have seen an increasing acceptance at least of the fact that Biblical content is subject to interpretation. Being mediators of this content gave teachers a special status vis-a-vis their pupils by virtue of their having attained adulthood and therefore being better able to understand and interpret such knowledge. Not only the emphasis given to content but also the low status ascribed to pupils is not acceptable to the majority of current educationists such as Hull (1982, 1984), Watson (1987) and Chamberlain (1989) in the English-speaking world, while Ball and Larsson (1989) indicate similar sentiments in Sweden. The low status of pupils and the consequent lack of a role they could play in their own education is also patently not acceptable in the climate of participatory democracy that characterizes South Africa at the present time.

The second principle which has been rejected is the corollary of the above point. The higher status afforded to adults left pupils with a correspondingly lower position, which explains why Viljoen (1970:48) was able to write of the child as an "object" who only in later life becomes a "fellow subject".

Gluckman (1981:111) has stated that all the Afrikaans writers on Education that he had studied view childhood negatively. This negating of the status of the child explains why, amongst many other authors who write from a CNE perspective, Viljoen (1970:36-37) is able to identify the attainment of adulthood and not the full realization of the child's potential at whatever stage he or she may be as the goal of CNE. Because children are seen as unable to uplift themselves without adult intervention Gunter (1974:55) can assert, quite logically if one accepts his premise about children, that CNE precludes child-centred education. In contrast to CNE the child-centred approach is not content- but child-driven since those who espouse this orientation, such as Goldman (1965, 1966) and Dewey (1974) believe that the needs of the child should guide the educational process. Child-centred education will be shown to receive support from most of the educational writers who have addressed themselves to the issue of which of these two approaches to adopt and who have conducted research that has had a bearing on this study. The concepts of child- and Bible-centred education will be dealt with in more detail in later chapters of this study.

Cognizant, as most contemporary educators are, of the need to educate all children, whatever their background, the third principle that has been rejected concerned the claimed national aspect of CNE. This denied the broad nationhood of all South Africans in that it referred only to the so-called white nation, a point brought out by Du Plooy, Griesel and Oberholzer (1982:152) when they refer to the "nation" of South Africa as being founded in 1652 and having its historical roots in Athens, Rome and Jerusalem. That an approach should focus on any one group within South African society is self-evidently no longer acceptable. The need for an approach to RE which is as much inclusive of a diversity of faiths as CNE was exclusive attracted me to the work of James Fowler. His principle thesis was that there exist modes of religious or

non-religious faith or meaning making that are common to humanity. They show regularities of structure, follow a stage-like development and they are independent of the content of belief. It will be argued later in this chapter that lack of attention to content is desirable given the diversity of the South African mosaic of beliefs and teachers' lack of knowledge of such beliefs.

No significant work that has appeared in the past five years supports an approach to RE from a CNE perspective, and all the writers I have read have advocated approaches that are clearly free from the suppositions and implications of this system. This suggests strongly that CNE as a theoretical basis from which to work has been rejected by at least the majority of contemporary South African writers in the field of RE.

The justification for giving a resume of a system that I believe no longer has anything like the influence it once had is that the three principles outlined above will be challenged later in this study and alternatives to them suggested when concluding remarks concerning a suggested methodological model for RE in South Africa are made. I have been guided in doing this by empirical evidence gained from questionnaires and interviews which were administered to serving teachers. The principles which will be challenged can only be understood in the context of the larger system in which they were formerly grounded, while an appreciation of the worth of new models is enhanced by viewing them in the context of the principles they are seeking to replace.

## 1.2 Alternative approaches to religious education.

In contrast to what Gluckman (1981) characterizes as the Calvinist based and white oriented approach of CNE all the current educators to whom I will refer in this thesis, such as Stonier (1993) and Rossouw (1991), have attempted to address



the problems and opportunities that present themselves in the context of the multi-cultural nature that has come to characterize much of the school landscape in this country, including of course the religious diversity of pupils. Furthermore, and in keeping with the movement away from CNE with its justification for having RE in schools that was based on exclusive religious and political grounds, the attention of recent publications such as the South African Teachers' Association (1993) and the Namibian Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (1991) have concentrated their attention on instructional and, to a much greater extent, philosophical models. All these models have attempted to meet the criteria of sound education. In line with current educational thinking the low view of the child and the excessively high view of the teacher have been questioned since it was realized that meaningful dialogue between teacher and pupil could not take place with such views in place. Without such dialogue the child was precluded from playing a significant role in his or her own education. In addition, no "special pleading" has been attempted on the grounds that RE deserves a protected place in curricula by virtue of the alleged Christian nature of the country, as had been the case when CNE held sway. Recent publications by educators and institutions such as those mentioned above have also sought to make RE a socially responsible subject that seeks to justify sound citizenship practices from a moral standpoint among pupils.

In short the debate concerning RE in schools has moved out of the realm of ideology and a narrow religious perspective to one in which educational and civic considerations are given prominence. Rather than impose a philosophy on the child the child's needs should dictate strategy and content, according to post CNE writers. This has given rise to the recent growth in this country of what has been termed child-centred education, in contrast to the Bible-centred approach which was

characteristic of the CNE era. Yet, in the legitimate debate that has centred around a more general rationale for RE in South Africa, the more specific issue of methodology is not being addressed adequately. This lack will be demonstrated in some of the contributions to the debate concerning the future of RE which will be described briefly below.

### 1.3 The future of RE.

A recent short publication by the South African Teachers' Association (1993) and one from the Namibian Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport for grades 8, 9 and 10 (1991) are examples of a philosophical rationale that encapsulate the child-centredness and civic responsibility of the approach described above. The Namibian document is by far the most comprehensive of the new approaches that will be dealt with in this chapter. It has a section devoted to its rationale, broad goals, curriculum objectives and learning objectives. It is able to specify content since it is avowedly Christian oriented and also addresses the issues of scope, sequencing, time schedule and assessment, as well as having a section devoted to implementation and training. In terms of this study the most significant part of this particular syllabus is that it is the only one of the new approaches in Southern Africa to devote significant space to methodology. This it does on the assumption that the teacher's main task is not to be the purveyor of information that more-or-less passive pupils imbibe. Instead it views the teacher as the facilitator of participatory learning activities in which pupils play a vital role in their own education. Thus the teacher's approach should be to "pose problems....and to assist learners in developing problem solving strategies"(1991:6-7). With reference to the main concern of this study teachers are advised to keep in mind pupils' developmental stages in selecting assignments.

Most other contributions to the debate that deals with the future of RE have given an overview of what they consider to be the most viable rationales or broad approaches to the subject. On investigation these are seen to exclude a methodology or details of content. One such contributor is Stonier (1993), who, writing on behalf of the Open Schools Association, gives the advantages and disadvantages of four options. The first of these involves the retention of Christian based Bible Education, the second entails the elimination of the subject altogether from school curricula while the third involves teaching parallel programmes that cater for the different belief systems that may be represented in schools. The fourth option entails the teaching of a multi-religion programme where the approach is stated to be educational rather than the nurturing of the pupil in his or her own religion. This assumes that nurturing is not educationally appropriate without providing a justification for this view. This last programme is favoured above the rest. As with the other approaches mentioned earlier there is the stated belief that the best of the programmes mentioned by Stonier also has the ability to foster sound citizenship practices in pupils as well as to foster empathy for beliefs other than those with which pupils may be familiar.

The Independent Forum for Religion in Education (1994:5-6) has adopted a similar stance to the above two contributions to the debate. It puts forward a philosophical rationale for RE, describing this rationale as pertaining to "broad state policy and structures, not to practical implementation at local school level". No methodology is therefore suggested. This document also contains the option of four models that are identical to those proposed by Stonier. The Forum goes further than have the other two contributors to the debate mentioned above by proposing that two examinable subjects be implemented at school level. Consistent with its attempt to provide a philosophical rationale only for RE, the authors

confine themselves to a definition of these subjects in terms of a broad description and the aims that may be realized through them.

Very similar sentiments to those mentioned immediately above are expressed in a discussion document issued by the Core Syllabus Committee for Life Orientation of the former Cape Education Department (1994). It goes further than any of the proposals mentioned thus far by describing teaching-learning content as well as teaching-learning strategies or methodologies. Both of these are sketched in broad outline only as evidenced by the use of such non-specific terminology when describing strategies as "learning depends on the learner's observations, perceptions and impressions and should therefore be empowered to observe, perceptualize and experience learning content"(1994:7). No attempt is made to describe methodology or content in any detail, but rather to provide very broad aims which they believe future syllabus planners should attempt to realise.

The absence of anything more than a cursory glance at methodology in the above-mentioned documents is not to provide a criticism of individuals but to point to a gap in the debate concerning the future of RE. The compilers of these documents may have had no intention of dealing with methodology at this stage of the debate for what may be sound reasons. The point is merely being made that the question of methodology is hardly being addressed.

One other exception to this tendency to exclude methodologies from the debate are the points made in a recent publication of the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (1993). This book does not include a justification for any rationale but instead provides input of a nature that makes it a practical "hands on" aid to the RE teacher who, it is claimed, does not need to be an expert in religion to be able

to use it effectively. This is achieved by designing the programmes to be applied by teachers acting as facilitators for pupils' exploration and research, an approach which is in line with current educational thinking. Such an approach will find expression in the views of most of the educational writers referred to in particularly the last chapter of this study. Together with the Namibian document this is the only recent Southern African publication to make an attempt to provide for needs of a more practical nature in the multi-cultural classroom, such as syllabi and a list of suggested resources. Together with the former Cape Education Department and Namibian documents it is also the only recent Southern African publication to make specific suggestions for methodologies or practical "approaches", as it terms it, to teaching and classroom activities. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter it is this dearth of information concerning methodology to which this thesis will be primarily devoted.

Of the writers who have attempted both a philosophical as well as an instructional rationale for RE Rossouw (1991:6) has suggested an historicist paradigm for the subject that follows closely on the model suggested by Troeltsch earlier this century. Though it too avoids an emphasis on content only and contains laudable general aims and a methodology that might otherwise make it acceptable in most curricula on purely educational grounds, I have pointed out serious deficiencies in the instructional aspects of the model that I believe render its use in schools problematic (Kleyn:1993). There are other problems in the realm of the philosophy of education but these are incidental to the issues that are addressed in this study. The practical problems are content related and centre around the difficulty that teachers would encounter in acquiring the sort of intimate knowledge of other religions that Rossouw believes they would need to teach an RE that is not solely Christian-based. He calls for an understanding of

other religions that is not merely factually based or "cold and clinical", but that displays an intimate "spiritual" knowledge of beliefs other than one's own, including the nuances of practice that do justice to a living faith (1991:17). But gaining such knowledge is beyond the capabilities of most if not all teachers of RE given the lack of preparation time by which they are constrained and the lack of incentives that they suffer under. Therefore Rossouw's views are unworkable and make no contribution to a possible methodological debate.

Summers (1990) is another writer who has attempted to point the way forward, also by describing four philosophical rationales, of which three are similar to the ones proposed by Stonier. While Stonier does so by implication Summers specifically precludes the elements of devotion and evangelization from his rationale for what he believes to be the best of the options. He differs from Stonier however in proposing that one of the options should be to allow a school to be given the authority to design its own syllabus according to the cultural composition of that particular school. No mention is made of methodology.

#### 1.4 Teachers' strength in methodology.

Having asserted the need to address the issue of methodology in RE the question remains regarding what teachers are to do with the content of beliefs in state schools where Christianity no longer has the preeminence it once had. Clearly the multi-faith aspect of our schools has to be reflected in teaching and debate. I have argued in another publication (1993) that school teachers are unlikely be able to do justice to beliefs and practices other than their own since they are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge of the complexities of a living faith. I have also argued that many teachers would not be able to display the degree of empathy

with beliefs other than their own that would do justice to such beliefs. I have furthermore suggested that the only people having such knowledge and empathy are the adherents of faith groupings themselves, of whom many are likely to be found in the very classrooms in which teachers practice their craft. Having such a wealth of expertise at their disposal, teachers should be in a position to do what they are better at by virtue of their professional training and experience. This is to act as facilitators and guides in analysis and discussion that would follow exposure to content. They should not, it is suggested, attempt to be experts in the field of content. In this process it would be the adherents of various beliefs themselves who would provide the content of lessons. This point will be argued at greater length in the concluding chapter of this study.

This study will be developed on the assumption of teachers' lack of mastery of the contents of various types of beliefs that are found in the multi-faith, multi-cultural classroom on the one hand, but their strength in the practical issue of methodology on the other. As has been stated the specific methodology which will be focused on in this study is one which involves teachers' understanding and use of a stage-like development in the beliefs of the pupils they teach. The model does not deal with content, nor, I am suggesting, should teachers of RE.

For specific recommendations to emerge, however, that may be relevant to the more practical needs of teachers who may want to use such a stage appropriate methodology it is necessary to discover their orientation toward this model of growth. Without a scrutiny of and response to what teachers think about this model any recommendations concerning methodology would take place in a vacuum and have very little relevance to what actually occurs or might occur in the classroom. My response to teachers' attitudes follows on an analysis,

described in chapters six to eight of this study, of questionnaires and interviews that were administered to serving teachers of RE in both senior and junior schools. On the basis of the strengths and weaknesses thus revealed teachers may gain insight into their own attitudes and values, which for some of them may have been tacitly held and therefore not open to their own scrutiny. The weaknesses thus revealed may also on reflection be seen as impediments to the effective utilization of a guiding methodology they may otherwise have wanted to use. An examination of the results revealed by the interviews and questionnaires may also expose areas of weakness to those involved in teacher training.

A number of writers will be shown in the following chapters to be dealing with the development of faith or meaning that they believe to be a universal human activity, thus fitting it as a methodology for use in the many heterogeneous classrooms that are found in South Africa. No other South African writers in the field of RE have proposed using a methodology in the multi-cultural classroom based on faith stage theory and Moore (1985:182) is unaware of any syllabus planning in the international sphere that is based on a theory of faith stage development. This being so this study is dedicated to the development of such a broad guiding methodology that is applicable to all the different forms of meaning making that teachers are likely to be confronted with in the pupils they teach. It is a suitable methodology since, it is claimed, the process of meaning making is independent of whatever content is entailed in the belief and shows structural stages that are constant in form as well as in development. This makes prediction of the likely growth in faith of the individual possible. It is reasonable to assume that from a knowledge of how meaning is made in these stages there could flow universally-applicable methodologies that would be appropriate for teachers to use in each of the characteristic modes of meaning-actuation that James Fowler (1974, 1981, 1982, 1985,



1986), one of the principle theorists informing this study, and others have identified. For educational planners this means that the development of a methodology does not have to wait for the settling of the question concerning rationale since the methodology is independent of the form RE will take in the future. This methodology is especially valuable if RE has to do with overarching life principles or beliefs that are not religious in nature, as I have found to be the case amongst the majority of pupils I have interacted with over more than two decades of teaching RE.

The model has value in other ways. Unlike cognitive models, it claims to be describing the progression in belief of the whole child, including growth in the affective domain. It encompasses unconscious structuring processes, the growth of imagination, the use of symbols, the ways in which people's response to their meaning environment leads to personal development. The model also has a social perspective since it includes the influence on the individual of the striving of others as they too seek to find or to make a meaning to live by. The model claims to be giving a truly holistic description of the growth of human faith.

The following chapter will describe the origins of Fowler's model. It will also explain two elements of his work that have an important bearing on RE. The first is his preference for the term faith to describe humanity's attempt to come to meaning in life, when others such as Moore (1985) and Moran (1983) believe he should have used another term. I will explain the reasons for my agreement with his choice of term. Chapter two will also explain why he believed it to be a universal human endeavour, the second of his educationally relevant claims. Chapter two will also explain how changes in faith occur. The contributions of other writers working in

the same field will be described. A critique of the model and of related work will be given, particularly from the perspective of Religious Education. It is necessary that the thrust of Fowler's work as well as its alleged weaknesses be explained so that it might become apparent exactly what body of knowledge it is to which teachers are responding and why some of their responses to it may be considered to be educationally inappropriate.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. Stages of development of faith.

#### 2.1 Literature review.

As was stated in the previous chapter this study will be concerned with teachers' perceptions and uses of the model that claims that development in faith or meaning-making follows a stage-like progression. It is useful to know this so that the information teachers have offered through the questionnaire and the interviews may guide syllabus planners who may wish to incorporate such a model into their curricula. Teachers too may find the responses of other teachers illumine their own attitude to the model. An analysis of the answers to questions that teachers were asked will be given in following chapters.

The formulation of these questions was guided by the research findings of several developmental theorist who have contributed to the debate concerning the progress of faith and developmental stages of growth. Chief among these is James Fowler (1974, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1986), whose interest has been in a type of meaning-making that transcends religious borders, and John Peatling (1973, 1975, 1982), who in his later work followed in Fowler's footsteps. Ronald Goldman (1965, 1966), whose interest has been in meaning-making among children in a broadly Christian context, has provided valuable comment from a specifically educational perspective. To understand Fowler's views it is necessary first to consider the work of Jean Piaget (1951, 1952, 1955, 1958, 1968, 1971), who was concerned with cognitive development related to the physical sciences and to mathematics and to whom Fowler acknowledges his indebtedness. Watson (1987), Slee (1986), Dykstra (1986) Moore (1985) and especially Moran (1983) will provide

critiques of some aspects of the stage development model that has been constructed by Fowler.

Quite naturally what unites all these theorists as developmentalists is their perception that change is inevitable or, as Fontinell (1973:324) has it, "There is no refuge from change" in a world in process. Though his work does not refer to stage development of faith the sociologist Berger (1973) will be referred to briefly since he, along with Fowler, attempts a rationale for the universality of faith- or meaning-making.

I will now proceed to describe how the above writers would have us understand the development of faith and also to provide a critique of their viewpoints. Throughout there will be an emphasis on the value of the model and of the critiques of it to Religious Education, particularly of its claimed ability to include all the shades of meaning-making teachers are likely to encounter in their classrooms.

## 2.2 Fowler's indebtedness to Piaget.

Fowler's claim for the universality of the process of faith-making is one of the cornerstones of his work, describing, he claims, a universal endeavour to make sense of reality. Because it is universal he prefers to use what for him is the broader word "faith" rather than the more restricted term "religious faith", a distinction which will be explained later in this chapter. The educational value of Fowler's preferred term will be explained. The stage-like development that the progression of faith follows will also be explained, as will the claimed independence of the process from any particular content to which faith may be tied. This chapter will briefly explain the educational value of the independence of the process from content. In general, however, detailed

educational recommendations will not be made in this chapter, leaving that task to the last chapter of this study.

A certain amount of overlap occurs in each stage between faith development, intellectual processes and what Laurence Kohlberg (1969, 1974, 1981) has termed moral standing, for which reference will be made respectively once again to the work of Jean Piaget and, more briefly, to that of Kohlberg.

Fowler was guided in the construction of his faith-stage model by the French educationist Jean Piaget. Piaget (1955) was concerned to explain stage development of cognition in children. This he did in terms of several characteristics of children's attempts to come to cognitive understanding of the physical reality with which they are confronted. Firstly, within each stage the various acquisitions or internalized understandings will be constant so, for example, the acquisition of the notion of volume always follows that of weight; secondly, each stage is characterized by an integrated structure of cognition that is unique to it; thirdly, the structure of one stage becomes a part of the structure of the next so that inferior structures are integrated into superior ones; fourthly, each stage has its moment of preparation followed by the moment of its accomplishment; lastly one can distinguish the final state when equilibrium, or the child's satisfaction with the results of his or her cognition, will have been reached.

Fowler's (1981:98) understanding of stages of development follows the Piagetian tradition in that he believes the process to consist of three qualities closely related to those that characterise the stages of development of Piaget. The first of these is that each stage is built on previous ones to form what is to all intents and purposes a hierarchy of stages, in which later stages subsume previous ones. There is therefore a linear progression of stages without the

possibility of any one stage being skipped over. Finally, since they describe the form and not the content of stage development, the claim of universality is made for stage development. Fowler departs from Piaget, however, in his belief that change is not initiated solely by biologically-or genetically-given factors as Piaget held it to be, but rather that it was strongly influenced by the individual's social environment. Nor did he believe in a hierarchy of value being connected to the progression of stages. Furthermore he was concerned to show that meaning-making involved affective or "passional" activity as much as it did cognitive activity. Finally, he was concerned to describe and explain the development of faith not just by the child but also by the adult. It is on the child's reaching to faith that this study will, however, concentrate.

Those aspects of the term "stage" that have a bearing on the concerns of this study need to be defined, however, before the term "development" is dealt with. To do this we must turn to Piaget, who defines stages in terms of a development of understanding or "operations of the mind" as he terms it. It is necessary to include this aspect of his thinking in a study of faith development since without cognitive operations of some sort there can neither be content to a faith nor can there be a process, however rudimentary, by which it is reached. I will not confine myself to cognitive operations; I will also include affective ways of knowing such as the use of imagination by which Fowler and others believe people attempt to make sense of reality.

Fowler (1981:49) quotes Piaget's characterization of each stage of cognitive development as having an " . . . integrated set of operational structures that constitute the thought processes of a person at a given time". More simply stated, a stage is the characteristic way in which the child comes to cognitive knowledge during a particular time of his

life. Moran (1983:25) sheds light on Piaget's understanding of how knowledge is gained by describing it as a relatively stable way of structuring the constituent parts of an experience into an integrated whole that makes logical and existential sense to the child. This way of making sense of reality is unique to the stage with which it is associated. The central characteristic of this structuring process which we call intelligence or knowing, is to transform rather than merely to contemplate. Agreeing with this viewpoint Emling (1974:65) maintains that to gain knowledge is to change some aspect of reality as it is represented in one's own mental structures. This can be done by modifying something we wish to understand either by taking it apart to explore how its constituent parts fit together or by enriching it with new relationships. There is concern therefore in Piaget's thought with how cognitively (or via rational thought) children arrive at the sort of knowledge that enables them to adapt to their physical environment rather than with the content of any systems of knowledge they may have. Piaget's and Fowler's emphasis on process rather than on content will be followed in this study. Following Piaget, Emling (1974:63) believes that normal children are able to arrive at knowledge since they have at their command an integrated and coherent cognitive system with which they organize and manipulate the world around them. More specifically genetic epistemology, as Piaget (1968:v) describes his work, aims to discover the psychological structures that underlie the formation of concepts fundamental to science. Emling regards this as the unifying element in all Piaget's writings.

Piaget avoids the claim of being able to pinpoint how one can perfectly arrive at knowledge by avoiding static categories of description in favour of dynamic categories. He describes all cognitive development as being constantly empowered by and aiming toward equilibrium, which occurs when the cognitive structures children have acquired allow them to make sense of

the reality with which they are confronted. He describes the progress toward equilibrium as consisting of a series of active compensations by children to changes or "disturbances" in their environment, the purpose being to adapt schemata or structures in the light of these disturbances so that conflict, error or gaps in knowledge between the schemata and the environment are eliminated and understanding is reached. Piaget (1952:68) assumes everyone is born with the desire to achieve this. However, Moran (1983:26) believes that since everyone's environment is constantly changing in some way or the other equilibrium can never be finally reached. What is certain, however, is that change toward equilibrium will take place in a sequence that can be charted with a high degree of probability; Piaget (1971:202) believed that, given one stage the next, more adequate stage can confidently be predicted. The increasing adequacy, though never fully realised, comes as an inevitable result of change because it was already there in an earlier stage, albeit in a latent or epigenetic form. It is on this latent ability that increasing complexity and adequacy of thought are later built. The equilibrium thus reached, Piaget (1971:356) believed, is characterized by "opening", which is an increased range of abilities acquired by children as they grow older, and "integration", which is their increasing independence from their environment .

This independence gives children an increasing power to determine the path their own affairs will take. Such an increasingly adequate way of dealing with reality leads to a hierarchy of stages, the child developing the schemata in each one so that they become successively more comprehensive, differentiated and complex. The order in which these acquisitions are made is constant. For example an understanding of volume always follows that of weight, as indicated earlier. An effect of this increasing mastery of the environment, Piaget believed (1955), is that the child



acquires a greater depth and certainty of selfhood; the courage thus gained allows greater risk-taking in relationships with others and with the self. I would add that this further suggests the possibility of a path being opened to a relationship with a decisive or perhaps infinitely greater other.

Since there is always a reaching forward to new understanding the metaphysical idea of finality is replaced by the scientific concept of telemony, a term transliterated from Piaget's French. This describes a movement whose course can broadly be mapped, rather than a static state. By his description of equilibrium as not just the goal but also as the ongoing process of life Piaget avoids giving final answers, replacing them with a description of what is more and what is less likely to happen. This is in line with science's stressing of the tentative nature of its findings. According to Gardner (1974:57-59) this is possibly why he chose to view everything through the metaphor of action, action being a process whereby children do not relate passively to their environment but rather actively transform it. Moran (1983:52) agrees with Piaget that interaction is an apt term since it accurately describes the give-and-take between individuals and their environment. On the one hand children are the dominant factors in imposing their own mental constructs on reality (albeit the ability to do so is dependant on the emergence of genetically- or biologically-given structures), yet it is that very reality that calls forth the adaptation. Children however, as Emling (1974:62) has pointed out, are able to overcome whatever constraints this biological structure might otherwise have imposed due to the elaboration of new mental structures .

Each stage is cumulative, building on the insights of the previous one but reworked, containing an anticipation of new problems that the new insights suggest will occur. If new

structural features in any particular stage are found, Piaget (1955) believes it would indicate that the contents of the previous "inferior" structures will have been reworked and incorporated into the following "superior" ones. The pattern is arranged in a sequence that is invariant.

### 2.3 Stage shifts.

While in a stage children attempt to assimilate into their structures of thought or schemata what there is to be known in their environment. When these characteristic attempts at making sense of reality fail because the structures at their disposal prove to be inadequate there is a crisis, a struggle between the possibilities presented by their new biologically-given capabilities on the one hand and the failure to integrate these new capabilities into their present ways of knowing on the other. Emling (1974:60) describes the integration of new ways of thinking in terms of the more mature structure gradually "winning over" the previous stage. Amongst other consequences of a failure to do so the individual may, in the area of religion and faith, begin to doubt his beliefs. This may occur, as Allport (1964:10) has pointed out, in the crucial area of the understanding of imagery and symbol and, according to Hough (1986:123), in perceived contradictions in belief.

The individual may resolve-"accommodate" in Piagetian terms-the dilemma by generating new ways of knowing; a stage transition occurs when enough accommodation has taken place to require a transformation of the entire operational pattern of knowing. If it is successful this transition may be protracted, painful and dislocating, or normal accommodation may be aborted-Fowler calls such a stage being "arrested"--in which case the individual reaches a state of equilibrium between his ways of knowing and his environment. It is only when an individual has reached a state of equilibrium that the

characteristics of any stage can be defined, yet even in such a state development is most likely already taking place, even if only in embryonic form.

The cognitive theorist David Ausubel (1967:10) has similarly described a process of potential growth involving the accommodation of new information through the modification of existing structures, while Kohlberg's (1969:347-380) stages of moral reasoning and Erikson's (1959) psycho-social stages fall into a similar category. Piaget and Fowler are therefore dealing with a process of development that has achieved a high degree of acceptance across a wide range of academic disciplines.

#### 2.4 A critique of Piaget.

The conceptual separation of cognitive ways of knowing from affective ways referred to earlier represents, for some, a significant gap in Piaget's thought. Yet Piaget acknowledges the importance of feelings both in life in general and in operations of the mind, intending instead, according to Fowler (1981:38), to concentrate on cognitive operations, which exhibit logico-mathematical structures and reveal a person's capacity for scientific discovery and insight. These constitute Piaget's main concern. Given this explanation, Fowler (1981:101) believes it was permissible for Piaget to separate cognitive and affective structures .

However, the absence of reference to affective paths to knowledge is of little worth in a study of moral reasoning and faith development, which involves valuating actions and their consequences as well as evaluating the self in relation to one's own expectations, the expectations of others as well as that of a decisive other. It is similarly impossible, Fowler believes, to evaluate faith using the criteria that are used in testing levels of the more restricted way of knowing that

we call cognition. Instead the two logics, which Fowler (1981:102) termed the logic of rational certainty and the logic of conviction, do not negate each other but form a comprehensive spectrum of perceiving reality, with reasoning in faith as a balanced interaction between the two .

Following closely on this is the second major deficiency that Fowler sees in Piaget as a source of knowledge about the process leading to more general understanding. This concerns his lack of attention to the role played in adults by imagination in coming to knowledge. A notable figure such as Einstein (1964:961) shared Fowler's belief in the importance of imagination, believing it to be more important in science than knowledge. Though not a social scientist one assumes he had valid insights concerning the road to discovery. Related to this lack is Fowler's (1981:103) criticism of Piaget's neglect of symbolic understanding and the related lack of attention to unconscious structuring processes. For Piaget imagination in children is fantasy play and in adults it may manifest itself, for example, in making ideological constructions, but both have little to do with knowledge as Piaget understood it, since knowledge is focused only on those phenomena which are capable of being empirically investigated. Fowler does not take issue with Piaget's denying that ideological constructions, which Fowler identifies with faith, are knowledge, but he does deny that knowledge as defined by Piaget is always necessary for one to know something.

Fowler wants to understand what type of knowing faith is and to describe its characteristics, since he believes that faith "in some form is necessary and inevitable for human beings" (1981:104). To this end he focuses attention on the more aesthetically oriented right hemisphere of the brain and the ecstatic and imaginative modes of knowing that are associated with it. This is a brand of knowing to which Piaget has given no attention for the reasons indicated above.

Together then with these affective means of knowing the cognitive explanation as a route to follow to understanding how faith is arrived at will be continued in this study. Faith is here understood as a means to understand and relate to any non-material reality which is perceived as being of ultimate concern, including beliefs in notions such as justice. An emphasis on the process leading to faith thus defined will be undertaken because of its wide applicability in a variety of classroom settings where the content of personal beliefs may vary greatly (including non-religious meaning making), but where the process, as will be demonstrated later in this study, is very similar.

## 2.5 A Critique of Stage Theory.

As has been mentioned earlier, Piaget believed children who were not able to understand more complex conceptual issues and advance to a following stage failed to do so because they had not yet acquired the biological structures that permitted this to occur. However, Watson (1987) disagrees, alerting us to the fact that what we interpret as being an inability in children to understand more complex religious issues is not a consequence of biological/genetic lack. It is rather, she believes, a reflection of the inadequacy of their language and/or experience which may itself be a reflection of the poor quality of their religious education. She challenges the view that children do not have religious experiences and that they lack the cognitive tools to reflect on these experiences, quoting a series of experiments carried out by Margaret Donaldson of Edinburgh University. Using simple variations of some tests devised by Piaget, Donaldson found that children's understanding improved significantly if the content of the tasks interested and made sense to them in the light of their experience. Barrett (1986:73) similarly found children she tested were able to use high levels of abstraction about

things they knew well. Conceptually higher level thinking, Watson (1987:161) maintains, "seems more related to language and thinking experience...., than to age or 'intelligence' per se". To support her view that pupils need long exposure to specifically religious language to understand information that has a high degree of conceptual difficulty she refers to the cognitive theorist Jerome Bruner's (1966) assertion that the ability to use language as a tool of thought requires long years of complex training and that growth of mind is always growth from the "outside" and not biologically determined.

As mentioned in chapter one Fowler departed from Piagetian theory by explicitly stating that social interaction is as important as biological advance in fostering stage development. The importance of social interaction may furthermore be thought to call into question the validity of Fowler's findings as well, since Mann (1994:26) points out he has based his research into the cognitive aspect of faith and religious meaning making on Piaget's conclusions. This is not the case, however, since what he has done is to draw on Piaget's explanation of how children make advances in thought not on the reasons he has given for these advances taking place. What is at issue is not the adequacy of all of Piaget's cognitive theory but the validity of the other mentioned theorist's empirical research and the conclusions they draw from them. It is in relation to Goldman's *modus operandi* and the conclusions he draws from it that Watson's other comments, discussed in chapter nine of this study, are apposite.

Lastly, the fact that stages are obviously not described during transition but when accommodation has taken place and individuals are "resting" in equilibrium, lends a note of artificiality to a description of stages of development. My experience in over two decades of teaching has lead me to believe that particularly adolescent children spend much time

in transition between stages when characteristic modes of meaning-making are not established. Another valid criticism concerns the difficulty of pinpointing the characteristics of any one stage since each one comprises a combination of seven elements, each with their own internal components, some of which lag behind the others when a stage shift occurs. Fowler sees this without appearing to acknowledge its implications and the difficulties these implications present. He (1986:33) puts it this way:"....transition will be uneven and ragged, with first one sector leading and then another catching up or creating a 'drag' on the total process". Stages are therefore not visible until they have become the resting place for the individual for an extended period of time. Yet at school level, particularly during puberty, it is as likely that children should be experiencing stage shifts as to be in periods of equilibrium, rendering large parts of their school life incapable of analysis if only a description of stages is used.

## 2.6 Applying Stage Theory to RE.

In addition to the explanation given by Piaget concerning the acquisition of knowledge and the stage-like progression by which knowledge is attained he has made two further general points that have more direct bearing on the awakening religious and meaning awareness in individuals, the primary focus of this study. The first can be seen as something of a warning that should alert religious educators to the need to be discriminatory in their choice of material. Piaget (1958) claimed much religious content is beyond the understanding of young children, since "the high level abstractions abounding in religion are well above the mental horizons of the small child". With this view Fowler (1981:252) and Goldman (1965:48) concur, given certain reservations, as do some of the other theorists in this study, though Watson (1987:161), among others, does not.

The second of Piaget's points sheds some light on how religious awareness develops in a child, though religious thinking did not form part of his concern. He coined the term decentration to describe the increasing movement in the individual's thinking away from egocentrism, or a centredness on the self, in which there is a non-differentiation between a subject, which is the self, and any object. This development enables children to free themselves from personal limitations, enabling them to view reality from a higher vantage point which at the same time is a higher plane of abstraction or, as Moran (1983:58) has it, "beyond the limits of bodiliness". This ability to recognize a "spiritual" or other non-material frame of reference makes the religious application obvious. Decentration comes as a result of cognitive advances which allow the individual first to see the perspective of another and then to use that viewpoint to reach a plane that is higher than either or both of their ways of perception. Moran (1983:57-58) helpfully adds that this process does not require the elimination of the notion of self but rather its affirmation. One assumes that were he to explain the reason for this in terms of interpersonal relations it would revolve around the need to have an appreciation of one's own worth if one is truly to appreciate the worth of others, or, as Jesus puts it "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39 NEB). Fowler's (1981:153) emphasis on the importance of imagination in understanding explains how one is able to appreciate the consequences of one's own actions on another.

Reference will also be made in following chapters to the influential work of Goldman (1965, 1966), and, following him Peatling (1973, 1975, 1982), who share an interest in the cognitive aspect of religious development, though their special emphasis was on development in a Christian context. Goldman's (1966:13) clinical interviews revealed stages of religious development that in their cognitive aspects



correlated with the three stages of cognition identified by Piaget, though with two sub-sets in each, and with the stages of faith referred to by Fowler.

Peatling's studies substantially support Goldman's conclusions concerning the stage-like progression of religious faith, the only difference lying in an earlier onset of what Peatling and Laabs (1975:107-115) describe as the "abstract" stage of religious thinking. The conclusions drawn from Peatling's research are supported in turn by studies undertaken by Laabs and Peatling (1975:107-115) and Tamminen (1976:206-219), which Peatling (1975:12) believes reveal a "remarkably general process of cognitive development", as this is expressed in religious thinking.

Though Goldman (1966:37) was working in a Christian context he has described an activity which he believes transcends religious thinking; it is "no different in mode and method from non-religious thinking". His use of the term "religious" will not be continued in this study however, unless specified as such, since it suggests the exclusion of non-religious meaning-making, the very thing he believes his description includes! His work has, however, come in for criticism from Nicola Slee (1986).

She has pointed out that he works with two quite different definitions of religion which he nowhere attempts to relate to each other. When dealing with the accumulation of data he defines religion as being characterized by "formal adherence to traditional patterns of religious belief and practice".

On the other hand, Slee (1986:87) claims that when he is dealing with the wider argument about religious development and its application to religious education, he characterizes religion as being "continuous" with ordinary life, providing a perspective through which that life may be "turned into something else". The serious criticism as far as this study

is concerned proceeds from this point. It lies in the fact that his analysis of children's understanding of Bible stories and religious practice does not bridge the gap between religious understanding which is "continuous" with "ordinary" life and a "religious" frame of reference. Slee (1986:87) believes that Goldman's conclusions about the inability of children to understand certain Bible passages may in fact not be related to their alleged lack of cognitive ability but rather to their inability to make the jump between the religious and the profane.

Furthermore the questions from the Bible which Goldman asked were presented without a context and in a modified form that Watson (1987:162) believes encouraged the kind of naive literalism the children showed in their answers. Believing children to be capable of far more than Goldman believed his studies indicated Watson (1987:163) refers to the authoritative cognitive theorist Jerome Bruner (1966) who maintains ".... any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development".

## 2.7 Fowler's faith stage model.

In his expanded understanding of the meaning of faith beyond traditional Christian lines Fowler (1981:4,32-33) was following in the theological footsteps of H. Richard Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and W. Cantwell Smith. While the psychoanalytical and depth-psychology work of Erikson and Jung are acknowledged by Fowler (1981:38) as important influences, it is the structural developmental tradition of Jean Piaget and Laurence Kohlberg which he has acknowledged (1981:98) as having had the most profound influence on his work. It is this which identifies him as adopting a social scientific approach to his work. Among those concerned chiefly with moral development, Kohlberg's (1969) influence is paramount. He too built his research on the stage model developed by

Piaget, but extended it beyond an individual's ways of reasoning about physical reality to describe the sequence in which moral development takes place. A developmental model is appropriate, Kohlberg believes, because the construction of social or interpersonal reality, from which moral judgements are made, shows a similar sequence of stages to those described by Piaget.

These influences, together with an analysis of his empirical evidence, have led Fowler (1981:5) to three main conclusions. The first is that while the beliefs and practices of faith take on a wide variety of forms, the structural patterns are predictable and universal in terms of form and sequence of development. The second is that each stage is built on previous ones to form what could be understood as an hierarchy of stages were it not for his insistence that no greater value be assigned to any stage when compared to a later one. I will explain shortly why I believe Fowler actually was describing a hierarchy of stages. Thirdly, as a result of this consequential development he believes, with Osmer (1985:174), that there is no possibility of any one being skipped over, so that it "represents a typical, almost rule-like, way of organizing some form of experience" .

The theorists on whom he has based his work as well as his own research have led him further to claim that the rational basis for the development of faith should be seen as a consequence of the interaction between a self bent on actively making sense of its experiences and the stimuli with which the individual is confronted. Since this desire to make sense of reality refers, amongst other activities, to a process of logical understanding his identification with Piaget's model of stages of cognitive development is understandable. Fowler (1981:78-79) also derives his descriptions of social perspective taking and forms of moral judgement from Piaget, though for these he draws much more heavily on Kohlberg.

Thus, it is not only people who act dynamically but the influence of their environment is equally important if one is to understand how meaning is made. In this way Fowler claims to be combining the behaviourist and humanistic schools of thought.

He differs from Piaget however in that he does not believe that stage shifts are precipitated by biological changes alone, but that they are strongly influenced by the individual's social environment. Hence structural stages are attained at varying chronological ages, though most individuals of normal or above intelligence find satisfaction in stage two or above, which will be described in chapter three, in their often tacit "search for an overarching, integrating and grounding trust in a centre of value and power sufficiently worthy to give our lives unity and meaning", as Fowler (1981:5) has it.

Fowler (1981:92-93) defines faith most comprehensively as being "peoples' evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and world (as they construct them) and of shaping their lives' purpose and meanings, trusts and loyalties, in the light of the character of meaning, value and power determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images-conscious and unconscious-of them)". More than merely a belief or a confidence or a dependence faith could be described as a total life orientation to an object of ultimate concern, which is seen as having the power to guarantee quality survival. As a total life orientation faith is seen to be the over-arching principle of life. For the educationist whose interest lies in educating what has often been described as the "whole" child there is an obvious value in knowing something about a process as holistic as Fowler describes faith development to be.

The use of terms such as "trust" and "unconscious imaging" alert us to the fact that Fowler (1974:208) is claiming that added to a cognitive explanation of the process should be a recognition of the importance of affective means of meaning-making such as are made up by imagination and intuition. The whole person is thus involved in the process of meaning-making. Others such as Kohlberg, who is particularly concerned with the development of moral reasoning in personality development, would add to cognitive processes the elements of valuing, the use of imagination (particularly the ability to manipulate symbols), intuition and other affective ways of knowing. This is particularly true when the unknown an individual is wishing to uncover includes himself, a point emphasized by Teilhard de Chardin (1964). They would also add the importance of response to whatever the knowledge is that is gained, as an adequate description of the holistic nature of faith-making. The inclusion of the related issues of response and commitment to the object of faith explains Fowler's (1974:210) assertion that "faith as doing or being includes and flows from faith as a kind of knowing". This is done in the company of those who are like-minded, giving recognition in turn to the social nature of faith making. In summary Fowler is describing what he claims to be the most inclusive activity with which humankind can be concerned.

Fowler (1981:27-31) believes that faith need not necessarily be religious though it is usually referred to in these terms. Religion, as a cultural phenomenon, is faith shaped and expressed. Since it is culture that carries language and the meanings that are embedded in it, variety in the content of faith is partly constrained only by the limits of culture. Those belonging to a revelatory religious faith would add self-disclosure by God as another basis of faith, or more accurately, their perception of that disclosure.

The claim of universality for the process of meaning-making, whether it is defined in specifically religious terms or not, is supported by Goosen (1973:40), who believes that people have a "...natuurlike geneigdheid om te glo". Cone (1975) believes that the Divine is always potentially the "Decisive Other", by which he means the Divine is a being who has the greatest power to contribute negatively or positively both to the developing image of the self and to the meanings that may be drawn together to form faith. Both Phiri (1993) and Roux (1993) concur with Fowler in their contention that faith is a universal phenomenon. Given his belief in the wideness of its occurrence Fowler has called it "...an apparently generic consequence of the universal human burden of finding or making meaning" (1981:33). This is probably why he insists that he is dealing with human faith. In following Fowler this study will therefore not follow a "grotesquely specific" line, as Wilson harshly describes Goldman's interpretation of religion in a specifically Christian way, nor will it necessarily include the elements of awe and worship, which Wilson (1982:63) believes define religion. Moore (1985:104) also believes it is inappropriate to confine our understanding of faith to a response to or relationship with God since faith's boundaries are so fluid, making an adequate definition of it exclusively in theistic terms very difficult.

Faith as defined by Fowler (1974:208) and "world-view" cannot be used synonymously though they both describe a unified understanding of the environment that subsumes other, more limited explanations within them. This is, firstly, because world-view emphasizes a cognitive approach to understanding, referred to by Fowler as the "logic of rational certainty", whereas faith additionally describes valuing and other affective paths to knowledge, called by Fowler the "logic of conviction". In other words the faith relationship involves the whole person, faith acting as an integrative force, drawing together the various elements making up an

individual's life. Secondly faith refers to both the content of that which is believed as well as the process by which that faith is achieved. This process essentially takes the form of response to the perceived call of the object or cause of transcendent value and power, and includes meaningful, positive interaction with others. This is why Fowler insists correctly that faith is always relational. On the other hand world view refers only to the results of this endeavour. Finally, the individual who exercises faith as Fowler defines it does so in a community of believers; defined as such faith is tri-polar, involving the self, other members of the community of faith and shared centers of value and power. While a world-view may be shared by others it is not essential to the nature of a world-view that it be shared (1981:17).

Mann (1994:24) has pointed out that this third characteristic reflects the specifically Judaeo-Christian religious tradition from which Fowler comes, a view with which Cumpsty (1995) concurs. Herein lies a problem for those teachers who would attempt to use an expanded definition of meaning-making, for this notion of a necessary community of faith does not describe the reality of the majority of those whose faith is specifically not religious, who often take pride in the very fact that they believe themselves to be independent thinkers and who, even if their thinking is not as independent as they would perceive it to be, certainly do not belong to a faith community of any sort.

By adopting the simple expedient of substituting the influence of the meaning environment in shaping the individual's faith in place of Fowler's claim that faith can only be exercised in a group of like-minded believers, we would retain not only the sociological nature of meaning making to which Fowler is pointing us but also its universality. It is possible to do this since meaning is always a product, at least partly, of human social endeavour. I believe that such a substitution

would leave intact the salient features of Fowler's model. At the same time it would allow teachers to be guided in dealing with all attempts at finding or making meaning among the pupils in their classes, whether they consider themselves to be religious or not.

Fowler's claim for the universality of faith is given support by Cox (1967:18) who, despite finding in a survey of 2278 sixth form pupils in England that many regarded themselves as agnostic or atheistic, believed that in the answers he was given by them there was "abundant evidence that the search for the meaning of life is universal" .

The sociologist Peter Berger (1967:29), in a much broader non-religious sense, describes the process by which individuals attempt to impose order on their experiences and thus construct a meaning environment or nomos as "endemic". It is only when the nomos attains the quality of being taken for granted and when its meanings merge with those meanings that are perceived to be the fundamental meanings inherent in the universe that religious faith is born, but only for some, according to Berger. For others meaning making remains secular.

Ronald Goldman's (1966:9) use of the term "religious thinking" to describe normal thinking that is directed to the divine, and not a "sacred rationality" that is wholly divorced from ordinary mental endeavour, is close to describing the universal phenomenon of faith making that Fowler claims it is. One would merely have to avoid using religious terminology to be describing an activity that encompasses both religious and non-religious paths to meaning making.

In similar universal vein Hough (1986:156) uses the term "religie" ("religiosity") to describe *fides generalis*, the universal human phenomenon by which individuals attempt to



orient themselves to a "greater other". He adds, citing Dooyeweerd, that it should be seen as an orientation to one's perceived "absolute" origin. Hough's terminology is however unhelpful in the context of one of the aims of this study since the singular form of the noun "origin" and the very word itself have religious connotations that would preclude an agnostic meaning making process which this study will attempt to incorporate. Neither is the term religiosity deemed suitable for use by teachers because it is not well known either to them or to their pupils. It could also, especially if it is used in a classroom context, widen the gap between what non-religious meaning makers perceive themselves as being involved in and what they perceive religious people as doing. Instead, using a less value-loaded term like faith, properly defined, which is often used in the wider sense suggested here, is more likely to narrow this gap. It is also more likely to lead at least some children to regard RE as not being so other-wordly that they can give it more than grudging assent. Use of the term faith is therefore more likely to make the teacher's work that much easier and more effective.

## 2.8 Critiques of Fowler.

### 2.8.1 Laurence Kohlberg.

Fowler's claim that faith may include non-religious meaning making is a claim with which Kohlberg has taken issue. Kohlberg (1974:14) initially believed that what Fowler calls faith is nothing more than a moral stage elaborated as an organized pattern of belief and feeling about the universe and life. Later Kohlberg and Power (1981:226) claimed that Fowler's broad definition of faith development does not distinguish it from ethical judgement but is in fact a sub-set of ethical development into which it is subsumed; the function religion serves is to organize thought and feeling at the macro level. This they believed to be true of other forms of

religious development also. Kohlberg (1984:14) believes that religious faith is nothing more than a confidence in the ultimate significance of morality .

Powers and Kohlberg (1981) are, however, using faith and religion interchangeably. As was mentioned earlier Fowler explicitly denies that this is the case, the conceptual by-passing that has occurred rendering their criticism invalid. Mann (1994:61) believes that the reason Powers and Kohlberg on the one hand and Fowler on the other do not effectively engage each other is that the former have misunderstood Fowler's use of the term faith because he uses it to describe such a wide variety of related functions that are not all necessarily religious.

#### 2.8.2 Gabriel Moran.

Moran (1983) takes issue with Fowler's use of the word faith. This applies particularly as it refers to two of the stages identified by Fowler, namely stages five and six, though less so when he refers to stages one to four. It is with these earlier stages with which this study is concerned since children at school are likely to fall into these categories. Since it is with the concept of faith with which Moran's criticism is concerned and not with the details of each faith stage, these details will only be dealt with in the next chapter.

Moran (1983:122) prefers instead to see faith in a much more restricted religious sense as a gift to which an individual may respond. An offering of any gift presupposes a giver. When such a giver is able to impart not just any gift but a powerful, life-changing one such as faith to anyone who asks for it, then the giver is here being identified with the omnipresent, personal, revelatory God of the Jew, Christian or Muslim. This interpretation is confirmed when he states that

the most focused meaning of faith is whether or not the individual has responded to God's call.

This creates a further problem, which lies in the inability of Moran's (1983:123) theistically oriented understanding of the simple structure of faith- "Are you on God's side? Yes or No"- to sustain a developmental model that can usefully address the many degrees of belief between strong faith-"Yes, I am definitely on God's side", and those who would say "No, I am definitely not on God's side". I believe that Moran's understanding of the term faith would preclude its use as a tool in dealing with the many people whose faith straddles the simple divide that he believes separates people. Quite obviously also his use of the term precludes its use in helping us to understand non-theistic attempts at making sense of reality, but his definition makes it quite clear that he believes Fowler should have used another term if he wanted to describe a wider type of meaning-making.

Moran (1983:123) agrees with Fowler that faith is neither merely an assent to truths that are not known by reason nor merely a reference to the objects of our belief. He disagrees, however, with W.Cantwell Smith, to whom he believes Fowler is heavily indebted for his understanding of faith. He understands Smith to assert that faith does not include meanings such as assent to truths and references to objects of belief, pointing out that while it is more than them it also includes them. He nicely counters Smith's (1979:35) contention that the content of belief lies outside the ambit of a discussion of faith-"That religious people are expected to believe something is a modern aberration"-by claiming that religious faith does have a content:"That only religious people are expected to believe something and that religious people are expected to believe only something is a double modern aberration" (1983:124). This claim can quite easily be accommodated in an expanded definition of faith since it

merely means that not only the process by which a faith is arrived at, but also its content, should be subjected to critical scrutiny. This is vital if pupils are to discern the good from the bad in the competing voices that call for their allegiance.

### 2.8.3 Further critical comment.

In my view a paradox is revealed in Fowler's thinking when one considers his insistence that no one stage is any better than another. In fact Moore (1985:171) believes he "feared" that others might value one stage above another when describing different stages. Yet, if words mean anything he was indeed attaching greater value to later stages by describing them as being "more inclusive", "more satisfying" and as enabling the individual to function at a higher level of complexity. Furthermore, Fowler (1981:31) describes a later conceptualization of God as being "more adequate" since it is "more true" than a previous one. And, since later stages have the power to "integrate" earlier stages, these earlier stages have less of this presumably positive attribute. Transition from one stage to the next is described as occurring when the individual is confronted by a stimulus or stimuli with which cognition in a present stage cannot deal adequately; the next stage is arrived at when accommodation occurs and older structures, precisely because they are less adequate, have to be improved or jettisoned if the individual is to deal more adequately with changing circumstances. It seems reasonable to suppose that a state that enables the individual to deal more adequately with his environment is a better state to be in than one which does not. Not only Fowler but quite naturally all developmentalists such as Osmer (1985), who has collaborated with him, select those thinking and experiencing functions which have a developmental character; they all describe the movement from lower towards higher levels of complexity. Again, one would normally assign a positive value

to the movement thus described. Finally, Mann (1994:27, 56) correctly notes that the implications of Fowler's normativity implies that those functioning at a "higher" level are doing so in a more "desirable" manner than those in the "lower" or "inferior" stages, to use Mann's terminology. In this respect one is reminded that Fowler (1981:98) himself acknowledged the "decisive" contribution that the model developed by Piaget, with its clear value judgements of different stages, has had on his own formulation.

Although Fowler and Piaget built their theories on an extensive empirical base the samples that both were using came from mainly white, western populations. This could exclude or limit the model's use in analysing third world, non-industrialized communities. As was mentioned earlier, both Cumpsty (1995) and Mann (1994) believe Fowler's model is applicable only in a Judaeo-Christian context.

#### 2.8.4 Basil Moore.

Moore (1985:172) is in agreement with Fowler that religious faith is an example of the much broader process of meaning-making with which all people are engaged. He proposes however that we weigh the merits and demerits of two other substitutes for the word faith, "gestalt" and "world view", since he believes that "faith" is so charged with religious meaning that it cannot be broadly applied. World view he rejects as implying merely an intellectual response whereas both he and Fowler, together with others such as Peatling and Moran, insist that faith involves a more holistic life stance that integrates all the facets of life, including the affective and imaginative. It is for this reason that Moore (1985:172) prefers to use another term, gestalt, for its primary meaning is to close gaps and bring things together, as Moore explains it.

## 2.9 Using the term "faith".

While agreeing with Moore that gestalt has a sharper definition the word itself raises the problem of lack of familiarity and therefore is less likely to be used by teachers. If the imperative of matching teaching to stage development is ever to develop into a debate that is going to engage teachers' minds and hopefully the practise of their teaching, then everything must be done to help them both to understand and to believe that the literature they are likely to consult as they seek to be better informed is relevant to their needs and problems. It must not seem in any way to be esoteric. A better choice would be to expand the meaning of an existing, well known noun to make it more inclusive than to use a word with which most teachers are unlikely to be familiar. "Faith", in my view, is just such a word.

That others are thinking along the lines that I am suggesting is evidenced by a discussion document sponsored by the Islamic Academy of the University of Cambridge (1990). This group has allied itself with other "faith communities", to quote their document, such as Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs to check the perceived advance of the secularization of British education. That representatives from these faith communities are co-sponsors of the document referred to indicates broad acceptance of the term when it is used, as the document states, in a multi-faith, multi-cultural society. I believe such a description accurately describes the nature of the South African society in which this study is anchored. In the document the term faith is used more than any other to describe what is admittedly a religious endeavour. For example the terms "faith-group", and a "faith-based education" are used and "faith" and "spiritual consciousness" are used synonymously to describe important aims of education.

The verbal form of the noun faith, "to believe in", should give no such problem, for "to believe in", as opposed to "to believe that" or just "to believe", is commonly used, already carries all the connotations of trust, care, loyalty and commitment that one associates with the word faith and has the additional advantage of being readily applicable, if properly defined, to a non religious world view.

Fowler's (1981:xii) wide-ranging definition of faith as a way of making and maintaining meaning in life that involves the intellectual, affective and social aspects of a person's life is able to offer useful commentary on a process that is likely to involve all or nearly all the pupils teachers will interact with in their RE classes, whatever their religion or even whether they regard themselves as having a religious outlook on life or not. It is possible to be used in an analysis of all shades of meaning-making because Fowler, together with Piaget, has separated the content of faith from the way in which it is made and maintained. Fowler (1981:9-15), echoing Smith, claims that it is possible to identify in everyone certain common strands that are separate from the specifics of symbol, behavioural codes and rites that are peculiar to any one particular religious belief system.

On the other hand, if RE teachers were to work with a "narrow" definition of faith, to use Fowler's term, it is less likely that they would use the large body of educationally relevant research that can illuminate divergent attempts to make sense of reality. It also prevents them from entering into meaningful dialogue with what may be the majority of pupils they are likely to encounter in their classrooms. For if dialogue is to occur then pupils must perceive that the subject in which they are engaged has relevance to their strivings, fears and the many other issues they regard as being important to themselves. This applies especially to non-religious pupils since they may in many RE classes make up

the majority of those present. For them to believe that RE is a subject that has any relevance at all they must be shown that the process of meaning-making is a process by which everyone is linked, whether they believe in God or not. Furthermore, exposure to specifically religious meaning-making can offer pupils without a religious background an expanded range of insights that may be of worth to them in their own personal pilgrimages. If a free interchange of ideas is encouraged then teachers too can benefit from being exposed to the range of options on display.

The astute teacher would use the universality of attempts to make sense of life to point out to pupils who are not religious that many of the criticisms they do and should feel free to voice concerning religious faith-making should be turned to their own forms of the process. This is important given the ease with which young people often accept uncritically the information that is directed their way, whether this information is secular or religious. It is especially important when information is internalized by the sub-conscious, as may occur when people are attracted to the life-styles of the rich and famous. The attitudes and values that this may engender are then tacitly held and, without the teacher's help, not subject to any kind of critical analysis whatever.

If the wider sense of the term faith is not used then possibly also excluded from participation in our research and in classroom activities would be pupils holding to basically non-revelatory religions such as Hinduism and agnostic religions such as Theravada Buddhism, as well as the making or maintenance of meaning of a host of non-religious endeavours that one is likely to encounter in many pupils. Examples could include the commonly encountered secular humanistic outlook, the equally popular hedonism or politically inspired forms of meaning making.



Given a general acceptance of the relevance to education of the model of a stage-like growth in faith it becomes necessary to progress to the details of the characteristic modes of meaning-making that children at school employ. For, if teachers believe the model accurately reflects their perception of the meaning-making of the children they have taught then they will have arrived also at a perception of its relevance. The opposite is, of course, also true. To make this evaluation teachers would need to know exactly how the model claims children arrive at faith. If teachers do find the model to be relevant then it could form part of the range of teaching strategies that they may wish to employ. Details of the first three of Fowler's stages will therefore be given in the following chapter since, according to Fowler (1981), pupils at school level are likely to display the characteristics of the first three stages only. It is worth noting that Goldman (1966) and Peatling (1975) generally concur with Fowler's description of how children at school-going age arrive at meaning.

The implementation of the model in the classroom would, however, be facilitated if it were preceded by teachers' having some idea of the ways in which they themselves are likely to or have been responding to the model, especially at an unconscious level. In having some idea of how teachers in general have responded to the model other teachers may have their own responses illuminated. Later in this study an analysis of teachers' responses to my questionnaire and interviews on faith development may provide such insights, but first I turn to a detailed description of the first three stages. I will end with no more than a passing reference to

what factors precede a shift to stage four since, according to Fowler (1981:177), few pupils will enter this stage while they are at school.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. General characteristics of the first three stages of faith.

#### 3.1 The model's relevance in South Africa.

Having mentioned in the previous chapter that both Piaget and Fowler conducted their studies among mainly white, industrialized children and adults respectively, it is necessary to reflect on the applicability of the model in the South African teaching environment. This is especially necessary for teachers in most of South Africa where many children come from non-literate societies in rural areas or have experience only of the non-formal sector of the economy, conditions which are very different from those of Europe and North America where the investigators who have informed this study conducted their research. Many of the assumptions and conditions prevailing there may not be applicable in the South African context since children in this country come from a fundamentally different culture characterized by different values, social structures and identities, to mention but a few issues. Yet one cannot be critical of a model, be able to apply it or be able to assess its educational potential without having some knowledge of it. This chapter will therefore attempt to fill in whatever gaps may exist in especially teachers' knowledge to enable them to know how much of the model is useable and how best to adapt it to their own teaching-learning environment. The description will reflect critical input from Moran (1983) and Moore (1985), together with further comment from the different but significant perspectives of Kohlberg (1969, 1981), Holm (1975), Goldman (1965, 1966), Piaget (1951, 1952, 1955, 1958, 1971), Peatling (1973, 1975, 1982). Hough (1986:22) contributes a description of a process which follows what he terms psychological-spiritual change.

Goldman would have us see only three stages of belief in the divine, that of the pre-religious, sub-religious and finally the religious stage; the boundaries of his stages and the characteristic type of thinking in each are similar to those of both Fowler and Piaget (1965:47). Developing on Goldman's United Kingdom studies, Peatling (1982:15), in studies undertaken between the years 1965 and 1976 in the United States of America, has demonstrated that the process of progression in religious thinking is developmental "in an almost classic Piagetian sense", though his studies and those of Tamminen (1976) in Finland do show some differences when compared to the model proposed by Goldman, as will shortly be indicated. One notes however that Peatling is concerned with cognitive advances that do not take into account the affective elements and commitment with which Fowler amplified his description of faith.

Fowler's delimitation of the ages when stages occur represent the average minimum age at which these stages manifest themselves.

### 3.2 The work of Harms.

Interest in the development of religious awareness is not however confined to relatively recent writers. Already in the 1940's empirical research led Harms (1944) to claim that not only the cognitive side of religious development take place at a much slower tempo than was previously thought but also that a threefold stage of development was discernable, whose parameters coincide almost exactly with those identified by Fowler and Goldman, as well as the educationist Piaget's stages of intellectual development. According to Harms the "fairy tale" stage is found in children between the ages of 3 to 6 years, the "realistic" stage between 7 and 12 years and the "individualistic" stage in children older than 12 years. On perusing his findings one realizes that it is not only the

ages which show a striking resemblance to the findings of the more recent writers mentioned but also the characteristic modes of meaning-making found in each of them. Apart from each lending weight to the findings of the others the similar emphasis given to intellectual growth points to the strong interdependence of cognitive advances and the ability to make meaning, especially where it is abstract, whether it be religious or not. This view is supported by Peatling (1982:16), who states that mental age is a "remarkably effective predictor" of the level of abstract religious thinking .

Yet this emphasis on the importance of cognitive ability could have placed a question mark around their conclusions. Is there not a blurring of distinction in them between the ability to reason one's way to meaning (one must remind oneself that Goldman's tests involved an examination of conceptual advances) and actually making that meaning personal so that it involves the whole being of the individual and not just his or her cognitive faculties? If one realizes, however, that the writers who deal with faith as a universal phenomenon define it in terms that include personal commitment, intuition, imagination, and other affective elements, then the gap that could have existed between being able to make meaning and actualising this potential in these holistic terms has been bridged. Fowler's delimitation of the ages when stages occur represent the average minimum age at which these stages manifest themselves.

### 3.3 Fowler's first three stages.

#### 3.3.1 Preliminary comments.

Moran (1983:114) correctly points out that the theorists who principally inform this study concur when it comes to delimiting the characteristic ages when these stages occur,

though Peatling's (1982:15) studies indicate a lengthier process of change from the "concrete" to the "abstract" stage. This unanimity could be of immense practical use to classroom teachers who wish to plan their teaching taking development stages into account; implementing this information could save them from what Piaget and Inhelder (1966:21) called "adulthood", which is a reconstruction of the religious understanding of children to adult-level pieties, theologies or doctrine. Even though faith stage two and three may only manifest themselves in many cases when the individual has reached adulthood they are, with rare exceptions, the ones Moore (1985:173) believes we will find most well represented at school level.

Peatling's (1982:7) studies have shown that there exist periods of rapid and slow growth in abstract religious thinking that appear to approximate plateaux, as specified in Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Rapid growth appears to indicate times of change from one such plateau to the next higher one. This would appear to approximate Fowler's description of stage shifts.

According to Dykstra and Parks (1986:15-42), each stage is structured as a unified whole in each of which there is a development of the following dynamically interrelating elements: the form of logic that is used, the level of role-taking that is assumed, the location of authority, the way symbols are understood, the bounds of social awareness, the forms that moral judgements take and form of world coherence.

As indicated in chapter one it is teachers' responses to and awareness of this model that this study is attempting to uncover. I have assumed, as will be explained in chapter five, that teachers' personal religious belief may have a bearing on whether or not they accommodate their teaching to the different stages of faith in which their pupils may find

themselves. It is assumed that some teachers may regard their pupils' stage of faith, if such a thing exists at all, as holy ground on which only God in His power and wisdom may tread. In other words the attitude to God's sovereignty will inevitably affect both teaching content and methodology. This being so it is necessary to know what it is that teachers may perceive as being inimical to the divine will. A description of the stages is further necessary so that actual teaching practice as suggested by the respondents in the research component of this thesis, as opposed to their theorizing about it, may be compared to what is generally regarded as appropriate methodology for each stage. Finally the choice of factors tested in the questionnaire that are thought to influence teachers' attitude to the very notion of a faith stage model only make sense in the light of some knowledge of the content of these stages.

The detailed description of the modes of meaning making characteristic of each of the faith stages that follows can be used by teachers of RE to identify normal age-appropriate responses in children. Critical questioning, which is often experienced as an irritating pupil habit, is sometimes wrongly identified as being unacceptable or abnormal behaviour, but Fowler and others believe it to be entirely normal. Knowing that such behaviour is regarded as usual can make such habits in children less of a threat to teachers. Teachers can also use critical questioning to point pupils to what may be for many of them more adequate ways of making sense of the myriad stimuli that call for explanation and integration into their system of meaning.

### 3.3.2 Stage one: the intuitive-projective stage.

Fowler calls the earliest stage intuitive-projective faith. It occurs typically in children between 3 and 7 to 8 years old and correlates very closely, as Moran (1983:115, 58) has

pointed out, with Piaget's pre-operational or intuitive stage. Similarly Kohlberg (1981:223) has shown that there is a high correlation between earlier faith and moral stages, citing Shulik's tests. These show a high correlation of . 75 between independently made ratings of moral and of faith stages. Moran believes, however, that by stages 3 and 4 they begin to diverge (1983:115), though this is less significant for this study when it is remembered that only the first three stages are characteristically found among school level children. Moore (1985:223), since he believes his term gives greater clarity, as will be seen below, prefers the term disconnected/ego-centric to describe this stage. The correlation thus revealed in the findings of independent researchers indicates that teachers can expect, with a high degree of probability, to find that the descriptions of these stages do indeed match the characteristic modes of meaning-making in their pupils. This makes possible the planning of a diversified teaching programme to meet the specific needs of most of those they teach.

Thinking in this stage is not yet reversible-young children cannot mentally retrace their steps-and there is a poorly-understood relationship between cause and effect so that they cannot yet organize their experiences into a logical sequence of events. Their thinking is disconnected and focused on only one of the details of the story to which they are relating, that is they are "monofocal", to use Goldman's terminology. This results in an inability to understand similarities or to formulate a coherent and consistent world view, and gives rise to an easy movement between fact and fantasy, and explains why a child at this stage has an answer to every question. Logic, or the lack of it, plays no part in his formulation of responses. An element of this phantasy world is artificialism, or the belief that natural phenomena are human-made.



Imagination, as the foregoing would suggest, arises at this time and is used rather than logic as a powerful and permanent force by which children orient themselves, both intellectually and affectively, to the beings/images that populate their environment. Goldman (1965:78) believes that imagination is both the means by which children compose an ultimate meaning environment and the way they "feel" their way to understanding in general. While conceding that there is no evidence that the child thinks religiously as adults would define it (religion is part of a fascinating adult world which the child does not understand) Hough (1986:52) believes there is the strong possibility of an inherent belief in the divine. Roux (1993) believes that every child has a religious potential, as does Moran (1983), who believes this can take the form of a powerful moral/religious awareness, especially the sense of good and evil. He believes this explains the centuries-old popularity of the great fairy stories of western civilization in which characteristically the triumph of good over evil is highlighted (1983:116, 61). Even in those children in whom a specifically religious awareness is found Goldman (1966:24) believes that a clear differentiation between God and all other reality, including the dragons and giants of his fairy stories, does not occur. God is seen rather as the greatest giant or whatever other being the child has focussed on. The divine is especially not seen in this stage as another person (anthropomorphism). Where God is not seen as a fairy tale character, He is seen as being "like the air-everywhere", as Moran (1983:116) has it. In short there is typically an intermingling of the concrete and the fantastic in thought.

Emling (1974:61) and Barnard (1966:367) describe this as the magical phase; the latter believes it lays the foundation for later religious development, where such development occurs, while the former sees magical explanations as taking the place of logic. This personal meaning appropriation occurs in large measure through the triumph of good over evil as represented

by heroic figures who rescue others. These "others" are in turn identified by children with themselves. God may be such an heroic figure.

Children's appropriation and personal construction of images and primitive symbols, here understood to mean words representing objects rather than higher conceptual thought, are unpredictable, giving them an attractive, refreshing individuality. But at the same time these images and symbols are longlasting and capable of calling forth powerful affective responses in later life. Piaget (1951:61) sees this as the 'time when there is the greatest increase' in vocabulary, but there is unlikely to be a concomitant increase in rational understanding or conceptual ability. Children need first to have lived through experiences in which they associate the word with something that is real to them in order to understand either the full import of the word or to have a real perspective of the time or space associated with the word. As has been mentioned this is a view with which Watson (1987) concurs. This view is also supported by Smith (1949) who points out that this applies similarly if an analogy or metaphor is used to describe an experience. Children must also have lived through the metaphor. For example the ongoing conflict between the Jews of the Old Testament period and their neighbours would have little meaning for a child in this stage. One of the consequences of this lack of understanding is frequent distortions and literalism. Yet symbolic functioning does begin now. It is a crucial cognitive advance not only since it paves the way for the creation and manipulation of the world of ideas, so necessary in making personal meaning out of the world of objects and events, but it also makes fantasizing possible. This itself makes possible the inclusion of animism as a feature of pre-conceptual thought (the attributing of life to inanimate objects) but it also relates to other explanations, such as thunder being an expression of God's anger.

These images are drawn primarily from stories. Children up to the middling teens characteristically love action-accounts of what people did, rather than being told what they believed. They may be recounted by adults as well as repeated by their peers, and are the most significant means by which younger children are able to understand the world and their experiences.

The child identifies every other person with himself or herself since others are seen as basically extensions of the self. Goldman (1965) maintains that self-centredness means no less than that others are "ruthlessly exploited". Similarly Emling (1974) sees the child as believing that the whole world is created for him or her. Wenar (1971:328) maintains that this takes the form of the child believing that his wishes alone cause events in the external world to occur, while Emling (1974:59) believes that a child at this age believes that everyone shares his thoughts, feelings and wishes. There is, however, the beginning of a realization in the child, through awareness of the consequences of some of his or her actions, of the need for behaviour to become less self-centred. Kohlberg (in Fowler 1981:73) calls this mutual interpersonal perspective taking. Put another way, Piaget claims that the child gradually frees himself or herself from this egocentrism through play becoming more and more "socialized". This is one of the external sanctions that control "pre-moral" impulses, according to Kohlberg's (in Havighurst 1973:409) analysis of the way morality is shaped in this stage of the child's life.

This process of becoming progressively less tied to the satisfaction of the demands of the self outlined above enables the child to reach the socialization stage in which he or she begins to understand the logic of proposition and outcome.

Meaning or faith-making is achieved by imitating the behaviour and speech in which significant adults in their lives make and express their own faith. The influence of these examples can be powerful and longlasting. Adults play another important role in that it is they who as the representatives of authority determine right from wrong. While they are thought of as having divine-like qualities such as omniscience and omnipotence the child is nonetheless beginning to discover that they are not altogether infallible. There comes a dawning realization by the child that he or she has to change his or her perception, to accommodate in Piagetian terms, if he or she wishes to overcome the cognitive discomfort that the clash of old beliefs and new insights causes. Bovet (1928) describes the coping mechanism employed by the child to deal with the disillusionment that this brings as being a process whereby he or she moves from "deifying his or her parents to parentalising the deity". Whether this is true for all children, especially those who have had traumatic relationships with their parents, is debatable. Notwithstanding this slow realization of fallibility the child accepts almost everything he or she is exposed to by adults. Literal understanding, as described earlier, forms the cognitive base of this acceptance.

### 3.3.3 Stage two: the mythic-literal stage.

The main factor precipitating a shift in the child to stage two, Piaget believes, is the emergence at about age ten of genetically-triggered concrete operations (Piaget's term) and the ability and need that follows that change to clarify for themselves the distinction between fact and fantasy. Emling (1974:63) accounts for this in the "solid cognitive bedrock" which the child in this stage possesses, enabling him or her to structure the present in terms of the past without the tendency to "tumble into perplexity and contradiction". While Fowler uses the term mythic-literal, Moore prefers the term

narrative-literal to describe this stage. Goldman (1965:47) writes of this as being intellectually the sub-religious stage since, speaking in a Christian context, he believes spiritual truths are frequently reduced to literalisms and thus lose much of their meaning. Yet, Goldman (1966:20) believes that the ability to think concretely enables the child to classify information as well as to reverse his or her operations. This means that generalizations that have been made about objects of knowledge can be "taken apart" to reveal the individual parts from which the generalization was made. And, being able to think operationally, the child can now understand logical connections between phenomena outside present observations, but only if he or she has experienced concrete examples of them as analogies. This allows the child to reconstruct plausible intermediate steps between these phenomena, and also enables them to make inferences regarding cause and effect. For Piaget (1958:245) this is intelligence without qualification.

Hough (1986:63) adds to this description of understanding the ability to make sound value judgements and the ability self-consciously to form and express an opinion.

The sum total of these advances is that the child, using his or her newly-acquired ability to reason both deductively and inductively, is able to understand and construct a world ("bind experiences" is Fowler's term) consisting of orderly, linear stories by which understanding is reached and through which the child expresses his or her own meaning environment. Meaning for the child in this stage is thus expressed primarily through narrative, especially when these stories tell of the formative experiences of significant groups to which he or she belongs and which explain the nature of the child's connection to them. By contrast with the earlier stage when the child was interested in individuals as isolated

entities, he or she is now able to conceive of individuals as being anchored in their historical and cultural situation.

Fowler (1981:137) uses the term "trapped" to describe how deeply meaning is embedded in these stories. According to him the child's inability to conceptualize renders him or her unable to draw generalized conclusions, to step outside the flow of life and experiences as it were, and to view them objectively. Closely related to this is the fact that the child's thinking still begins and ends with what is or has been physically accessible. This has three consequences. The first is that intangibles such as symbols are either consigned to the world of make-believe and illusion or are dismissed as nonsense, and are therefore not assimilated into the child's cognitive map of the world. The second is that the child has a poor concept of time, making systematic and chronological exposition of, for example, the flow of Biblical history, difficult. The third is the great potential for misunderstanding and later rejection when figurative expression is incorrectly converted into a literal mode. Goldman (1965:54) warns that for adults to insist on literal interpretation for most if not all Bible stories and to preclude critical thinking about it is to run the risk of creating "premature fundamentalists" of children, who will in later life reject not only the Bible but all religion since it will be seen as childish. Critical thinking, he maintains, must be exercised while the child still believes, and not after faith has been lost.

The child struggles to come to terms with paradoxes in this stage; he cannot hold two ideas in tension. For Moran (1983) this particular ability is a crucial determinant of what constitutes the meaning-making of adults.

Children's ability to classify enables them increasingly to sort fact from fantasy as they scrutinize their meaning

environment, though to help them to do this they will insist on demonstrations of proof. By this time fantasy is usually confined to the world of play and is, whether found there or in the "real" world, subjected to an ordering process.

Anthropomorphic images of God emerge at this time, aided by the child's emerging ability to take the perspectives of others. This enables the child to attribute to the divine the known characteristics of significant adult friends and relatives, but it also creates a need for a more personal relationship with God. This is possible perhaps because the child is able to transpose the child-parent relationship into the religious realm. If this is so it would not be likely to occur where the idea of God as an intimate father figure is absent or poorly developed, such as in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Judaism.

The child is typically so committed to fairness and reciprocity that for the child growing up in a Christian or Jewish environment even God is bound by the lawfulness of His creation. The child's belief in "natural" justice makes heaven and hell quite acceptable to the child who lives within a Christian frame of reference, representing as it does just reward for a life of good or evil. However, nuances of good and evil are not successfully dealt with; there are no grey areas between the fixed nature of right and wrong.

The fact that children operate continually within the ambit of their peer group make this group vitally important to them as a frame of reference. Though morality is therefore exercised within the peer group its authors and those on whom the child depends for authority remain significant adults in his or her life. They play a powerful role in the child's construction of a developing faith, typically giving stage two faith a decidedly authoritarian slant. Havighurst (1973:409) follows Fowler in emphasizing the importance to the child of obedience

to authority and conformity to the norms of his or her immediate community.

Peatling's (1973:537-540) studies among pupils at Episcopalian supported schools in the USA have shown that the shift from this stage to the next, "abstract" stage of thinking is slower than either Piaget or Goldman indicated it would be. Instead he found it to occur through a step-like progression via an identifiable intermediate stage that began earlier and ended, with the dominance of abstract religious thinking having become established, later than Goldman's studies of British pupils indicated. Laabs and Peatling (1975:107-115) found not only a similar progression among pupils at Lutheran aided schools, but, given the differences that are to be expected from school systems that differ in their degree of conservativeness, they reflect a similar developmental process. A Finnish study undertaken by Tamminen (1976) used the same instrument of measurement that had been used by Peatling and Laabs to discover that the same plateaux of thought identified by the Americans existed in Finland also.

However, the American samples were both taken from private school systems, charging significantly higher school fees and drawing from higher socio-economic groups than would be found in the state school system in Britain or America. This places a question mark on the validity of their findings for the majority of children in a country like South Africa, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter. One needs also to bear in mind that all these studies, as well as Piaget's and Fowler's, were undertaken in First World countries. This casts further doubt on their validity in describing the religious development of the majority of the children in this country who come from the Third World sector of the economy, with its reduced access to learning and, especially in recent years, almost daily exposure to intolerance of the views of others. The major problem could, however, be that they come



from a non-Eurocentric culture with all this implies about values, "knowledge", authority and self- and group-identity. The possibility that his model may not have quite the universality he may have initially thought it had is something acknowledged by Fowler(1982:126), who prefers to call his stage construct an extended hypothesis rather than an established theory, pending the completion of further longitudinal research and cross-cultural studies .

#### 3.3.4 Stage three:the synthetic conventional-stage.

The third stage Fowler (1981:151) terms "synthetic-conventional", while Moore (1985:176) prefers the term "personalized/conventional". It is found typically in the ages 11/12-17/18 or later. In this stage of adolescence the child and young adult is dependent on the opinions of trusted or significant adults to enable them to judge the worth of their own personality;it is on them that they depend for the formation of their developing identity by providing a mirror by which they may, if they are fortunate, be able, as Fowler (1981:151) puts it, to "....fall in love with a forming image of the self". Paradoxically, since power lies usually in the hands of adults, it is also the time when the child or young person is attempting to shake off real or imagined controls over his or her life, and establish his or her own independent identity, usually by taking on a perceived adult role. This explains the rebellious rhetoric common at this time. Yet it is a conformist stage, being acutely tuned to the demands and expectations of significant others, especially, but decreasingly, the individual's peers. They have not as yet established sufficient confidence in themselves to be able consistently to maintain an independence of opinion, but increasingly, Kohlberg (in Havighurst 1973:409) maintains, moral principles are based on individual conscience and respect for laws .

This is the age of formal operational thinking which allows the young person to reflect on his or her thinking, as it were to step outside the flow of his or her life and view it from the river bank, to continue to use Fowler's (1981:71) apt analogy. This allows children to generalise and to discern patterns arising out of their past experience, that is, a story of their stories, or to formulate a growing personal myth. It also allows them to compose a myth of their future, either with faith that it will accept them or dread that it will not, leaving the individual ignored and undiscovered. Formal operational thinking makes possible other advances; it allows the individual to appraise a situation or problem and to formulate a variety of solutions to it as well as to generate methods of testing these solutions. This is the stage when proof, whether it is viewed in experiential, historical or scientific terms, becomes a cornerstone of faith or, more usually in its absence, a lack of faith, particularly religious faith. This applies particularly to boys. Goldman's (in Cox 1971:45) research, albeit undertaken in a predominantly white society with a Christian background, reveals that by the age of twelve 23% of boys were critical, sceptical or agnostic about Christianity, whereas the figure for girls was 8%.

It is a stage when the ability to think conceptually enables children increasingly to work successfully with propositions and to free themselves from a world consisting only of tangibles. Confirmation of this in a Christian context comes once again from Goldman's (in Cox 1971:44) research, which shows that 80% of thirteen year olds interpret the Bible literally whereas the figure drops to 57. 5% for fifteen year olds. This conceptual ability enables children to formulate ideal people and states of being; they can be harshly critical of deviations from these ideals. Because unlimited alternatives become fairly suddenly available to minds that were previously limited to the world at hand, the moody

rebellion and endless debating may result from the mental confusion that the wide alternatives cause. Insisting that adults give reasons for things being this way and not that way may, Moran (1983:64) believes, be part of the problem of grappling with indecisiveness. Or the desire to debate issues may be a consequence of the fairly sudden realization by the individual of his expanded capacities and the desire to show these off as a sign of adulthood.

The individual's capacity for abstract thought permits children to develop further their ability in mutual interpersonal perspective taking, an ability that started to emerge in the previous stage. For some young people this manifests itself in acute embarrassment prompted by the thought that everyone is looking at them, yet moderated by their knowledge that they are looking at others also, and in some depth. One of the consequences of this is that their concept of God undergoes an enriching for just as they see others as increasingly complex so too they begin to see God as having inexhaustible depths.

Symbols, when they are expressions of deepest loyalties and beliefs are usually interpreted literally and remain tied to that which they symbolize. They do not represent ultimate reality, they are ultimate reality, so that if such a symbol is trivialized or debunked then it is not only the symbol which loses its power but also the divine for which it may stand, which, in being emptied of meaning, is "lost" to the individual. Even to demythologize symbols is usually a threatening experience for a stage three person since faith here is a possession, not to be reflected upon but rather to be jealously guarded.

Earlier the importance of adults as the individual's principal means to self-assessment was mentioned. But it is not only they who have significance for the stage three person, for

this is also the age of conformity with one's peers or the "common person", what Parks (1980) calls in its malevolent form the "tyranny of the they". It is mainly to their authority and expectations that the young people in stage three typically appeals when they appraise their own attitudes, values and beliefs, the lack of independence and confidence in their own judgement contributing to preventing them from reflecting on their judgement as critically as they would were they to reach stage four later. This lack of reflection by the individual on his or her own faith results typically in an interrelated system of beliefs not being constructed; what emerges is a loose aggregation of beliefs, its internal logic unexamined. In fact to examine critically one's beliefs may be perceived by some as doubting God. Notwithstanding these more dominant characteristics the growth toward personal responsibility and a critical appraisal of faith begins in this stage.

Though he or she can conceive of an individual as having a cultural and historical background, a stage three person typically relates to others as if they were merely an aggregate of individuals, not members of a group which has a culture and history of its own. In other words society as a whole is perceived as being merely a grouping of these individuals, without a network of laws, roles and systematically determined patterns of behaviour. Others are evaluated in terms of perceived personal qualities and not in terms of the diverse influences that shape them.

Meaning is defined in this stage chiefly in terms of interpersonal relations and the images of power and value in such meaning are extensions of these qualities as they are experienced in interaction with others. This was referred to earlier in the emerging relationship between an individual and the idea of God as father. It is thus evident that faith in this stage is chiefly affectively oriented; it is person-and

experience-centred, rather than reflectively oriented. Since people dwell in their most deeply held beliefs, not on them, this means that most beliefs, as opposed to the events mentioned earlier, are still often tacitly held, especially if the individual has grown-up with them, rather as described in the following statement attributed to the philosopher George Santayana (in Fowler 1981:161): "We cannot be sure who first discovered water. But we can be sure that it was not the fish. "

#### 3.4 Factors leading to stage four.

At the end of this discussion of those of Fowler's faith stages that are likely to be found in pupils by the time they reach the end of high school, it is necessary to look at those factors that are likely to precipitate a move to a stage four type of faith-making if teachers are to understand and perhaps be of help to those few pupils who do make this move. The following factors may apply to some still at school: serious disagreement over matters of principle with accepted authority figures; a perception of hypocrisy in these authority figures; significant changes in policy, speech or action by leaders who had been accepted by pupils as authoritative; experiencing reasonable points of view that are sufficiently different from one's own to throw into sharp relief both their relativity and anchoredness in one's own culture; an understanding of the historical and cultural influences that have shaped one's own faith.

Fowler goes to some lengths to point out that he does not regard a further stage as being in any sense superior or more desirable than any preceding one, though his use of adjectives such as "more inclusive" to describe a stage that follows earlier ones suggests the opposite. Using the term development itself has the same connotation of later stage superiority. This could easily be avoided by using the

neutral word "process", a term which Emling (1974:57) believes to be a better one than the English "development" to describe what Piaget was attempting to explain.

One characteristic of those in stage one to three and below is the tacitly-held nature of faith, which is viewed as a possession to be guarded rather than as a belief to be reflected on. Some teachers may be in one or another of these stages. If this is so it is probable that they will view the teaching of RE, especially if they perceive it to be a religious endeavour, in the same unexamined light as they do the practice of their faith. They may similarly view the Bible as something that is not to be critically examined, especially if they are religious. A belief like this may lead also to teachers discouraging a critical discourse concerning faith and the Bible among the pupils they teach. The fact that Fowler believes faith in this stage is "jealously" guarded may even lead to some teachers feeling threatened by critical questioning concerning faith and the Bible. Fowler has pointed to the close identification of symbols with the object for which they stand and the threat that is felt when the symbol is attacked or trivialised. He has pointed out that it is not the symbol which is perceived as being under attack but the very object of worship itself. It is possible that the Bible may be perceived as not a symbol for or a sign pointing towards God, but as having the same status as God. Self appraisal, the uncovering of what may be dimly perceived values and attitudes, may help teachers to cope with such a perceived threat. It may also help them to teach better generally. To discover in some detail how teachers view the model I will proceed in later chapters to analyse answers to questions that have attempted to lay bare their attitude to the model, to establish whether or not they do think critically and soundly about their teaching in the light of

what the model suggests. To achieve this end the views of a sample of teachers was elicited by means of questionnaires and interviews. The guiding principles behind the formulation of these means of gathering information will be described in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. Guides to research.

#### 4.1 The hypothesis.

In this chapter I will explain both the principles as well as the smaller details of procedure that guided my empirical research. To begin with the hypothesis that this study sets out to test consists of an assumption that observable regularities exist among teachers as they perceive their teaching styles and reflect on the factors affecting these perceived styles. This perception and the practice it gives rise to are to be viewed in the light of the model of a stage development of faith referred to in previous chapters. Knowing whether there is a lack or misconceptions in teachers' knowledge concerning faith development is important since, as was suggested in chapter one, the use of a developmental model such as this one could enhance educationally the status of RE in schools sufficiently to help to justify its inclusion in future curricula. In chapter two I argued that the model's main educational benefit was its ability to describe accurately the process involved in many different kinds of faith-making and so to provide teachers with the tools to construct existentially-relevant lessons that would find meaning among most of the cultures and beliefs represented in South African schools. Given that such a benefit does exist then an unwillingness to use any such model or a significant lack of knowledge concerning one as indicated by the teachers polled in this study would point to the need for remedial teacher education since such knowledge throws light on not just a theoretical orientation but also the sort of lesson planning that inevitably issues from a theoretical standpoint. Such lessons may or may not be appropriate in the light of the



various abilities the model claims are characteristically exhibited by pupils of various ages.

#### 4.2 The research method: introduction.

I have subjected the empirical evidence to the inductive-deductive research method in order to ascertain teachers' attitudes to a faith developmental model. Cohen and Manion (1985) point out that this method follows accepted practice in the social sciences by moving in a systematic and controlled fashion from personal observation to hypothesis. Hypothesis is described by Medawar (1972) as "an imaginative preconception of what might be true"; it can also be thought of as a dialogue between the possible and the actual, or between two voices, the one imaginative and the other critical. In the case of this study the hypothesis was yielded by way of an analysis of the relationship between practice and reflection on that practice and theory. The hypothesis will also provide a framework or be a pointer to future research. Using an hypothesis puts in the hand of researchers a powerful conceptual tool as it allows them to get "outside" themselves and the object of their study. Once having been arrived at the implications of the hypothesis are then compared to both accepted theory, and, after possible revision, to the validity of the hypothesis in the light of the empirical data that has been gathered. To be valid therefore it not only needs to be systematic and controlled but it needs to be empirically based so as to be a check on findings which might otherwise be based merely on opinion and anecdotal evidence. Since the evidence and the implications are related to the world of shared experience and are open to scrutiny by fellow professionals, they are subject to corrective criticism or corroboration, whichever is appropriate.

##### 4.2.1 Data and the hypothesis.

Raw data was obtained from twenty teachers who were interviewed and from sixty-five other teachers who returned questionnaires. The questions were formulated on the basis of an understanding of the theory which has equipped me to be able to concentrate on those issues that more than any others reflect teachers' attitudes to the model. Secondly, I have reflected on commonly held views and attitudes to which I have been exposed in more than two decades of interaction with teachers of RE. These two sources have yielded eight factors which I believe would cast light on teachers' attitudes to the model. I have attempted to discover the role played by these factors, which are described at the end of this chapter, by the use of several questions posed in the questionnaire. Also to be described at the end of this chapter will be three more general questions, the answers to which, I believe, adequately summarise the role played by the eight factors. The use of only three questions in the interviews was deemed to be necessary because of the time constraints imposed by using this method to gather information and the belief that the free-ranging nature of interviews would bring to light other information without my having to ask so many questions that confusion might have resulted.

In analysing the answers to the questions explanations will be advanced that will begin to take the shape of theory. The theory will attempt to describe systematically the nature of teachers' attitude toward and actual use of the concept of a sequential development of faith in their pupils that is, broadly-speaking, age related.

An attempt has been made to demonstrate causality between the responses of different teachers' rather than merely showing a measure of association between their answers. To discover whether a causal relationship exists among these responses various factors which may have influenced teachers' perceptions and use of the faith development model were

suggested to teachers through the questionnaires and interviews. These consisted of a wide range of possible influencing factors but always included among them some that are directly faith-model linked to ascertain the relative importance of this model vis-a-vis other influences. If, on analysis of the answers, causality is found among the responses the researcher will be able to explain and predict the phenomena, which in this study consists of the knowledge and behaviour that teachers of Religious Education have and display concerning the possible development of the faith of their pupils. Put another way an attempt was made to gather seemingly isolated and unrelated empirical phenomena and to organize them into a coherent conceptual framework. As this organization took place the hypothesis and the research design which was based on it changed. The findings will be provisional until they receive sufficient validation or are modified as a result of further studies.

#### 4.2.2 The quantitative approach: the questionnaire.

The data has been gathered using both questionnaires and interviews since research by writers such as Cohen and Manion (1985) has shown that as both methods have their own inherent strengths and weaknesses, as explained below, both are needed to complement the other. Each one is an example of a preferred methodology for the social sciences which, while insisting on the rigours of the scientific method, has different uses.

The first, traditional method is known variously as the normative, positivist, behaviourist, quantitative or determinist approach and seeks to uncover universal, natural laws (not just measures of association) that lead to increasingly complex and more abstract theory. This theory becomes greater than the sum of its constituent parts, which are the views of individual people which make it up. Basic

reality or theory is therefore a collectivity of points of view. The only way to reach this level of theory is to abstract it from the data from which it is derived; in this sense it is external to and subsumes the particular manifestations of human behaviour. Because it accurately describes all these individual manifestations the theory can also be said to explain human nature. This assumption leads to an emphasis on men and women as responding mechanistically to their environment, in other words being conditioned by whatever external and internal stimuli they may have encountered; the cause of their behaviour therefore lies in their personal past.

This method also seeks to discover and analyse relationships and particularly the regularities or trends which it expects to find in these relationships. The social scientist with this bent focuses on those aspects of human behaviour which are repetitive, invariant and predictable.

Though knowledge begins with the actor the fact that this knowledge is "hard" or external to the individual, having a life of its own, puts the researcher into the category of disinterested observer, if it is possible to be so, and strongly suggests the method he or she should use to collect data. A method which proceeds from this approach, though its outcome is determined by the type of (subjective) questions that are asked in the questionnaire. It will be used in this study for a number of specific reasons. These are that it provides information with a high degree of reliability since the anonymous nature of questionnaires lessens the problem of bias and threat by removing person-to-person contact; in an interview situation a respondent may feel obliged to give answers he or she feels the interviewer wants to hear while the perceived threat of another presence may prevent answers being given that are felt to be personally embarrassing, though relevant. Another advantage lies in the sheer volume

of data that can be processed, ensuring that if trends do occur they will more likely be identified, possibly leading to the discovery of a universal law as referred to earlier. Finally, the fact that answers can be processed at leisure lessens the likelihood of overlooking relevant information. This is an advantage shared with the taped interview.

A number of practical considerations that Youngman (1982) believes enhance the effectiveness of questionnaires were used. The covering letter clearly indicated the purpose of the questionnaire and thanked respondents in anticipation for contributing information that was claimed could significantly improve the quality of religious education. This letter is given in the Appendix. To put respondents in a relaxed frame of mind and to induce a positive attitude to what was to follow the first questions were aimed at eliciting non-threatening personal and professional biographical information. Youngman believes people like dealing with non-threatening personal matters that are also well known and therefore easily answered. Questions concerning respondents' qualifications were not included to avoid possible embarrassment caused by a perception that these might be considered inadequate.

Neither pages nor questions were numbered to avoid the perception being formed that the questionnaire was long and answering it would be a tedious process. Clear spaces were maintained between questions and between questions and instructions and general instructions were separated from specific ones, which were placed immediately above the questions to which they referred. Answer boxes were consistently positioned throughout.

Preliminary readings were first undertaken to suggest a rough plan of the theoretical issues which needed to be considered before the questions were formulated. After an idea of the

design of the study was arrived at most of the questions were formulated according to this design. A pilot study was then administered to a few teachers in order to discover if any of these questions needed rephrasing to remove ambiguities or if they took too much time to answer. Ambiguous questions usually result in random answers which prevent the emergence of trends. Long questions or statements were broken down into more manageable ones and other changes were made where appropriate. No double negatives or double questions were used; an explicit manner of questioning was maintained throughout to allow respondents to become used to the method of questioning employed. This enabled them to marshal and express their own thoughts more effectively. Suitable answers were never suggested. Literary finesse was sometimes sacrificed to keep questions short. Respondents were not asked to give their opinions concerning other peoples' attitudes since misinterpretation of something as nebulous as the opinions of others is probable. Rather, when opinions were required and this occurred frequently, the most effective judges of opinion were asked, and these are the people who themselves have them. To avoid adding an intelligence variable questions were kept simple.

As an adjunct to more factual ones open-ended questions with adequate space for full comment were also used. This was designed to allow as much elaboration as was needed to remove the likelihood of resentment being caused by respondents perceiving that the questionnaire did not allow them to do justice to the depth and complexity of their opinions. To the same end a form of question that allowed for the expression of subtle nuances of opinion was frequently used. In this type of question teachers were required to respond to statements or express an opinion on a multi-point scale where the differences between alternative answers or degrees of agreement with the statement were both fine as well as personal. A variation of this type of question dispensed with

a numerical scale but still allowed for different levels of agreement. Important to the success of this type of question were the clear instructions that were given, especially those regarding the meaning of the numerical link. Such methods revealed a wide range of answers that also allowed for easy tabulation. Statements to which respondents were asked to respond were kept short. The questionnaire itself is given in the appendix.

A major weakness however lies in the inability of questionnaires to lay bare those elusive, intangible qualities that are often the hallmarks of the complexity of individual rather than corporate human behaviour. It is felt that this approach leads to excessive abstraction from the hopes and desires of people, depersonalizing them, leading to Harre and Secord (1972) wryly pleading that we should "for scientific purposes treat people as if they were human beings". To uncover this more elusive data it was necessary to use the interview, one of the methods espoused by the anti-positivist/qualitative/voluntarist school.

#### 4.2.3 The qualitative approach: the interview.

The strength of the interview method lies in its personalness, in its ability to capture the uniqueness of an individual's attempts to create, modify and interpret his or her world. Put another way the emphasis is on attempting to arrive at results with greater validity though perhaps with less reliability through obtaining depth and quality rather than quantity of data. The knowledge that is believed to be important is of a "softer" nature than that sought by the behaviourist school and resides within the individual rather than being external to him; it is subjective and unique. Being so data gathering techniques aim at "getting inside" individuals to understand the subtle differences of thought and behaviour between them. In fact, it is claimed by

psychologists such as Buhler and Allen (1972) that meaningful understanding can only come if the researcher personally shares, through the interview and other techniques, the experience of the subject of his or her concern and thus to come to an understanding of such a person in his or her entirety. There is thus an emphasis on the systematic study of social "episodes".

Rogers and Stevens (1967) maintain that as people have self-awareness and language they cannot be studied in the same way as one studies in the natural sciences; we must use, they believe, ourselves to understand others and others to understand ourselves. Nor should we expect to find, it is maintained, laws and regularities governing human behaviour or any sort of ultimate truth; all that it is possible to arrive at is a way of making sense of the world by demystifying the social forms humans have created, in other words by explaining understanding which is usually implicit. Such a goal of social research describes accurately the purpose of this study, which is the laying bare of what may be tacitly held values and attitudes among teachers.

With the individual taking centre stage, this approach sees action as intentional and future oriented, though the past in small-scale societies may provide guidance for that action. The individual, since he or she is self-monitoring and can exercise personal responsibility and individuality, freely shapes his or her own environment rather than merely responding to it. Thus the emphasis is on a world of meaning actively created by people, for to understand what people do the researcher needs to remember that they act on the theories about themselves and the world which they themselves have created.

But are these theories true in the sense that they accurately represent the real social reality with which people interact?



The voluntarist approach has been criticized for its emphasis on what people think they know since they may be wrong for a number of reasons. One of these is that nobody has complete understanding of the wider society and therefore a person's knowledge must be partial. Similarly the emphasis on episodic study may obscure a wider network of causal relationships. Added to which, unbeknown to them, individuals may have the views of others imposed on them.

Critics of the behaviourist school claim that all of this means that systematic, scientific research with its armoury of conceptual tools stands a better chance than the subjective individual of making sense of that which is known only in part, and arriving at a comprehensive body of knowledge having universal reliability.

#### 4.2.4 Synthesising the positivist and voluntarist approaches.

In summary the fact that meaning is often more than we make of it and partly external to individual perception should lead us to a balanced interpretation of social reality that is able to move from the analysis of one situation to a wider theoretical analysis and so on. The issue is not whether to use questionnaires so as to arrive at a mass of abstractable data or to use interviews to get inside the world of the actor, but to use both to supplement the other.

The above is theoretically true but needs to be applied to the study at hand, which is to discover the attitude teachers of RE have toward the stage model of the process of changes in faith. This information was sought by putting a number of questions in written and oral form to teachers so as to discover more precisely the nature of their orientation to the model. The questions used in the questionnaire were

formulated according to the eight factors mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. These factors are:

1. teachers' knowledge of the characteristics of the development of faith, given by some indication of the ages when major shifts in content and thinking skills may be expected to occur in pupils, together with appropriate teaching strategies;

2. the possibility of teachers' being able to identify such developmental stages and the desirability of their manipulating them in some way through using whatever teaching strategies are deemed appropriate, in the light of a belief that this may solely be the prerogative of God;

3. teachers' perception of what factors generally facilitate pupil learning;

4. teachers' attitude to the possibility and desirability of stages of faith occurring within themselves as adults, in the belief that what they permit and desire for themselves is similar to what they will want for their pupils; special attention will be focused on their attitude to human being's role vis-a-vis that of God in a changing faith; if they perceive divine sovereignty to be overwhelming where they as teachers are concerned they are unlikely to try to intervene in their pupils' faith development;

5. teachers' attitude to innovation, with special reference to the time and energy constraints imposed on them by their general teaching load; the number of years taught may be important;

6. the relationship between any personal desire which a teacher may have to evangelize and perceived professional constraints on doing so;

7. the influence of church/mosque/synagogue instructional models on teaching;

8. the quality and influence of professional training for teachers.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter the influence of these factors was also sought by asking three more general questions in the interviews.

The first of these questions concerned teachers' rating of the influences that shaped their own teaching. To discover what their attitude was to these influences they were asked to evaluate a professional use of developmental stages in relation to personal faith and its mediation by the injunctions and practices of their religious community and the sacred texts that are a part of such a community. Of particular significance was the possibility that some teachers may have felt that even the idea of thinking let alone working with a psychology of religious experience could in some way rob the sovereign work of God of its significance by reducing religious conversion, belief and growth to being no more than one psychological phenomenon among many others. To ascertain whether or not teachers believed the use of the model would infringe on what was properly God's domain questions that tested professional or educational attitudes to a developmental perspective on teaching were inserted among "religious" influences and others of a more general nature so that respondents would be aware of the juxtaposition of these influences and in this way be able to judge the influence of the one against the other. It is of course true that most world religious faiths would claim that it is not possible to separate one's religious from one's non-religious life, but in practice this is an ideal probably not realised at all times. The questions in this first section were formulated on the

assumption that most teachers are able, at least theoretically, to separate their religious from their non-religious life.

The second of these factors which was believed to illuminate teachers' attitude to the concept of stages of growth was their perception of their pupils' stage of faith development. This question was asked on the assumption that a negative or neutral attitude would be indicated if teachers indicate little or no knowledge of such development and if, furthermore, this lack of knowledge is not viewed as a problem. This was attempted by testing their choices of various teaching strategies for their "fit" with the ages or stages generally deemed in the literature to be appropriate to them.

The third question concerned teachers' perceptions about themselves, since it was felt that if teachers' answers revealed an awareness of developmental changes within themselves, and moreover viewed these changes positively, they were more likely to expect it in their pupils and to be ready with a methodology appropriate to their pupil's stages of development. The opposite would of course also be true. The questionnaire itself is given in the Appendix.

It is important to note that the majority of principals assigned the teaching of RE to teachers who were prepared to teach the subject. This makes an important point about the state of personal belief of respondents since it is inferred that only those who have a measure of personal belief would be prepared to perform a task made arduous by the fact that it is non-examinable and therefore held to be unimportant by the majority of high school pupils. That they do so is probably because they see it as an outworking of their faith in society. Many of the points proceeding from an analysis of the questionnaire are therefore coloured by an assumption of

personal belief in respondents. Notwithstanding this assumption it was felt that to enquire whether or not respondents believed that they possessed personal faith might be perceived as being an invasion of privacy and so negatively impact on how they answered the questionnaire and responded to the interview. This item of information was therefore not solicited.

The following three chapters will describe and analyse the answers given in the interview and questionnaires so as to illuminate more precisely the way teachers are affected by these factors and allow the drawing of some general conclusions concerning teacher attitude.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. The influence of a perception of God and of developmental theory on teaching.

#### 5.1 Introduction.

An analysis of the answers to the questionnaire and of the interviews follows in this and the following two chapters. There were sixty-five responses to the questionnaire, thirty-nine from high school teachers and twenty-six from primary school teachers, to seventy-eight questionnaires that were sent, giving a return rate of 78. 2%; Youngman (1982) believes that a response of less than 50% would be likely to yield information of dubious validity. Of the twenty-two teachers who were approached for interviews, two declined to be interviewed. No attempt was made to select respondents according to a measure of their personal belief, though most would probably perceive themselves as being believers for reasons mentioned above. No attempt was made to test teachers in DET schools because of the danger of going into the townships as well as the difficulty of making contact with teachers in these schools. In addition cultural differences were perceived as being too great to be adequately addressed by any questionnaire that the author could have formulated.

In this chapter an analysis of the questionnaire and the interviews will be given to ascertain teachers' perceptions of the value of two influences that were thought would have an impact on them and their teaching. The relative importance of these influences will also be sought. The ones chosen were the influence of God and developmental theory since these were felt to be representative of religious and educational influences respectively. The questions that were posed were designed to test teachers' evaluation of the value of using the concept of faith stages in their teaching in the light of

other deeply-held beliefs and influences. Questions testing this influence are numbered 15a and f and 16-21 in the questionnaire.

Introductory conversations with principals indicated that most had assigned the teaching of RE to those they had identified as being members of the three great monotheistic faiths in South Africa. This fact can lead one to a number of obvious conclusions concerning the beliefs of RE teachers. The first is the daily expectation of divine intervention or a daily call to loyal service, according to the measure of commitment of any particular teacher, in any endeavour undertaken in the cause of God. Closely allied to the belief in this attribute of God is the belief in another, and that is a belief in the sovereignty of God. This permits the divine to perform any action seen as necessary, independently of any human intention or knowledge. It was assumed that these beliefs would powerfully impact on teachers' attitude to the model of developmental theory with which this study is concerned. Yet, at the same time, teachers are subject to other, non-religious influences. They have been professionally trained, they have interacted with other professionals in their field and they have their own experience in the classroom to reflect upon. This chapter will explore the relative influence of the two factors mentioned above through an analysis of answers to selected questions in the questionnaire and an analysis of relevant parts of the interviews.

## 5.2 Answers to the questionnaire.

Question number 15a asked respondents to state whether or not they as teachers should attempt to identify their pupils' state of faith, when, it was suggested, only God knew their pupils' state of faith. The reference to God identifies this question as dealing with a religious influence on teachers. The answers in this and the following two chapters have all

been converted to percentages. Responses indicated the following views among high school teachers, with a 3% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
5	8	31	38	15

13% of the thirty-eight respondents to this statement indicated that they were in agreement or in strong agreement that only God has knowledge of an individual's state of faith. By inference we can assume that this means that teachers should not attempt to delve into this matter and by further inference that teachers would therefore not even attempt, if it were shown to be possible, to apply different kinds of teaching strategies in accordance with the stage of faith evidenced in the lives of their pupils. The 31% of respondents who indicated a neutral response to this question should be added to the first figure as together they constitute an attitude by teachers which denies the importance of an application and knowledge of faith stages in pupils. Someone who is unwilling or unable to judge the value of something is unlikely to take the trouble consciously to use it. A total negative response of 53% indicates a significant theoretical lack in this aspect of RE teaching as well as, by implication, in the portfolio of different teaching strategies that one would naturally expect to accompany developmental theory.

Among primary school teachers the responses were as follows, with an 8% non-response rate :

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
11	27	15	31	8

38% of the respondents are either in strong agreement or in agreement that this is an area in which only God has proper



knowledge. If we add to this figure the 15% of respondents who were not prepared to express an opinion either way, then the figure becomes an even more significant 53% when compared to the high school group, who do not take pupils' stages of growth into account when they plan their teaching. The similarity between high school and primary school teachers is of course maintained at the other end of the spectrum, where, of those who indicated that they would take faith stages into consideration in their teaching, only 8% of primary school respondents felt strongly inclined to do so; the figure rising to a still small 15% among high school teachers.

As well as indicating an unwillingness by all the teachers to use what could have been a valuable part of their teaching theory, the figures for primary school teachers are surprising in the light of the fact that primary school teacher education clearly acknowledges the primary school child's scholastic career as being characterised by marked changes in perception and cognition. These responses indicate that this knowledge has not filtered through to actual classroom teaching, that it is perceived to be too difficult to implement, or that RE teachers have disagreed with it in theory.

In question 15 e teachers were asked to evaluate the effect on their teaching of one aspect of "secular" teaching theory, that is children's general development as opposed to faith development. This question was used to ascertain whether the absence of a reference to God and to religion would alter their response to what is felt to be a sufficiently similar influence. This was done so that, when a comparison is made, one can infer the relative importance of the two influences and whether their teaching is informed more by their religious convictions or their educational knowledge.

Among high school teachers the responses were as follows, with a 3% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
18	62	10	7	0

The vastly different 80% positive response would appear to indicate a dichotomy in the thinking of RE teachers that points to a false distinction being made between the sacred and the divine, as if RE teachers believe that to be good servants of God they need to apply different basic educational principles to similar problems that present themselves in "religious" compared to "non-religious" classes. The responses to the questions and the interviews that will be dealt with in this and the following two chapters will indicate whether this preliminary finding is true or not.

Among primary school teachers responses were as follows, with an 8% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
20	52	8	8	4

The positive response of 72% is close to the figure returned by high school teachers, and as such is significant in adding weight to the comments made above, especially those regarding the failure of RE teachers to apply a developmental theory to their teaching. One would have expected junior school teachers to be stronger than their senior school counterparts in applying a developmental theory.

Question number 17 tested the influence of obedience to the Bible or the Khr'an on the method employed to teach religious and other strongly-held truths. In the same question the influence of the following factors was sought simultaneously so that teachers could assess the relative importance of

obedience to the sacred text vis-a-vis these other influences: pressure of other school work, a fear of abuse of power by the teacher and the fact of every pupils' individuality.

High school teachers assessed the importance of their sacred text as follows, with a 12% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
10	8	10	24	36

Since no specific teaching method, as opposed to content, is prescribed by the Bible or Khr'an it can be deduced that the belief among 60% of respondents that they are following a method enjoined upon them by their sacred text (other answers in the questionnaire indicate that this is mostly the Bible) may indicate a lack of critical scrutiny of their method of teaching RE if they can make this sort of mistaken connection. A possible reason for this error, especially if the trend in answers to previous questions is being maintained by the same respondents, is the belief that whatever happens in an RE class must be informed by the teachings of the sacred text of the faithful believer since RE is a "religious" endeavour, and following such teachings satisfies their very natural desire to be true to their faith. Such educators adopt what will be referred to in chapter seven as a Bible-centred approach. Of course they may simply have confused content and method.

Among junior school teachers the figures on the same five-point scale were as follows, with a 2% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
8	4	8	20	58

The percentage of those who believe they follow a norm prescribed by the text of Holy Scriptures rises to 78%, apparently indicating an even greater lack of discernment, both of how they teach and what should properly inform it.

Question number 17 also tested the impact on the methodology employed by teachers of their recognition of every pupil's individuality. It was felt that a high value assigned to this implies a positive association, though not an identification, with the fact that each child has his or her own stage of development. This in turn implies a more positive attitude to the larger issue of the possibility of identifying stages of general development and perhaps even faith development, which together describe a professional influence on teachers. The influence of the recognition of pupils' individuality was inserted among other possible influences that were believed to be unrelated to the topic of stage-related RE teaching, such as pressure of other school work, in order to ascertain the relative importance of this influence vis-a-vis these other influences. I wanted teachers to be conscious that they were comparing the effects of this influence in the light of the other influences that were mentioned. High school teachers assessed the influence of a recognition of pupils' individuality were as follows, with a 9% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement		
0	16	18	36	21	

57% of respondents indicated that they did take every pupil's individuality into account. One could possibly infer that this indicates that respondents were inclined to follow a method that was dictated not by the teaching of Scriptures, but primarily by the needs of the child, or what will be referred to in chapter seven as a child-centred approach. These appear to be conflicting points of view. Yet all that the two above sets of answers reveal is that teachers are

agreeing with two of the statements to which they were asked to respond in question 17 without necessarily negating either. The significance of the answers lies rather in the degree to which agreement is given in each case, that is, whether it is significantly higher in the case of agreement with the importance of the influence of the sacred text and the desire to please God or higher with respect to the needs of the child and his or her stage of growth. In other words the question seeks to ascertain whether the professional or the religious influence is the greater. A statistical comparison will be made very shortly.

Among junior school teachers responses were as follows, everyone responding:

low agreement			high agreement		
14	4	35	35	12	

47% of these teachers indicated that they did take pupil's individuality into account.

No pattern was discerned among either sets of teachers to link those who indicated that they were highly influenced by the Bible or Khr'an with a low score on the recognition of pupil's individuality, though two out of the only three high school respondents who indicated "one" on the influence of the Bible/Khr'an (low influence) indicated a "five" on their recognition of pupil individuality (high influence). This may point to a greater sensitivity on their part to the differences between pupils, but the size of this sample is too small to permit anything other than a very tentative conclusion being reached. The significant point that clearly emerges, however, is that the affect of this "secular" influence is considerably lower than that of the "religious" influence described above, and confirms the trend that was

noticed in embryonic form in the first question dealt with in this chapter.

The next factor that was tested in question number 17 concerned the extent of the influence on methodology of a desire to please God. High school respondents answered in the following way, with a 12% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
8	8	13	26	33

59% of these respondents therefore indicated that their methods were influenced or strongly influenced by a desire to please God, a figure identical to that indicating obedience to the Bible/Khr'an. The concern of these questions is merely to gauge the extent of these two influences.

The primary school teachers responded in the following way, with a 14 % non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
8	0	12	8	58

66% of these respondents therefore indicated that their methods were influenced or strongly influenced by a desire to please God.

If the figures representing obedience to the sacred book are added to those representing a desire to please God then we arrive at a composite figure which describes the religious as opposed to the strictly educational influences on the teachers polled, though of course there is overlap between the two.

The composite figure for "religious" influences on high school teachers is forty-six out of sixty-eight, or 67. 6% of respondents who felt the importance of these related

influences. For primary school teachers the figures were thirty-seven out of forty-seven, or 78. 7%, giving a combined total for both sets of teachers of eighty-three out of one hundred and fifteen, or 72.1%.

The combined figure representing their assessment of the influence of every pupil's individuality on the other hand was thirty-five out of fifty-six, or 62.5%. The pupil-centred approach would be an example of an approach where the importance of educational influences is paramount, whereas the Bible-centred approach would be one in which religious influences exert a greater influence. Both of these approaches will be assessed in greater detail in the last chapter of this study.

The fact that this figure is almost 10% lower than the other quoted figure supports the contention made above that purely religious influences are more important than purely educational ones, especially among junior school teachers, though of course the two influences tested in question seventeen are not in direct opposition as were the influences tested in question fifteen.

The reference in question no. 17 to "levels of religious awareness" was also intended to measure the influence of another educational influence, that of teachers' perceptions of the religious awareness of pupils, but after the questionnaire was administered it was realised that this would probably be interpreted as referring to teachers' perceptions of their own religious awareness, thus invalidating the comparison. It was accordingly not used.

Question number 19 dealt with the influence on teaching methodology of the teaching methodology employed in the respondents' places of worship. High school teachers

answered a five-point scale in the following way, with a 3% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
30	13	13	32	9

43% of respondents were not or hardly influenced, while an almost identical 41% were, showing evidence in this latter group of a lack of judgement by almost half of the respondents of what is appropriate in a school environment. These answers were felt to be indicative of a lack of discernment concerning the needs of children since preaching in a place of worship is by-and-large undifferentiated according to individual ability or stage of development, is aimed mainly at an adult audience and takes the form almost exclusively of a sermon unaccompanied by discussion. In practice little use is made of audio-visual stimuli and there is little or no individual or group activity from the congregation beyond listening for sometimes extended periods-a poor example to follow where often restless youngsters are involved. This would indicate a similar over-reliance on religious influences, as was evidenced in answers to preceding questions. It is assumed teachers would not think of the Sunday School as a place of worship for themselves, while the question referred to "place of worship", which also precludes other interactive structures within a faith community where the teaching styles may well be appropriate to a school setting.

Primary school teachers answered thus on a five-point scale, with a 6% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
27	7	12	36	12

34% of primary school respondents were not or hardly influenced, while 48% were. This is a return which is much



more important as a sign of inadequate teaching methodology than the numerical increase on the high school figure would suggest since, as has been stated, primary school educators are dealing with subjects of whom most are far removed in conceptual ability, language proficiency and experience of life from the adult world of the service in church, synagogue or mosque. Yet without these attributes, as well as practical demonstrations, group activities and hands-on experience, real understanding by junior school children is very difficult to achieve.

Question number 20 assessed the influence of the content of services in the place of worship of respondents on the content of their lessons; high school teachers answered as follows, with a 6% non-response rate:

low agreement				high agreement
15	5	27	32	15

Put another way 20% felt that they were not much influenced whereas 47% believed they were. The first-mentioned figure is surprisingly high and the latter one surprisingly low in view of the fact that, suitably interpreted in the light of the learning capabilities and experience of their intended audience, sermon illustrations, contemporary testimonies and scriptural exegesis suitably applied could provide the raw material for any number of existentially relevant lessons without violating any sound educational principles.

Among primary school teachers the returns indicated the following, with an 8% non-response rate:

low agreement				high agreement
19	7	27	32	7

26% of respondents felt that they were not much influenced whereas 39% believed they were. These figures represent an even poorer appreciation of the possibilities offered by a correct use of a very accessible source of different stimuli. However, an alternative interpretation of these figures is that they represent an educationally sound appreciation of the difficulties attendant upon using information that is essentially adult and perhaps that has been left unrelated to everyday affairs, with children who are therefore unlikely to benefit from it. In view however, of the answers given to questions 15 and 17, and the relative ease with which relevance to the lives of pupils can be created, this seems unlikely. What is more likely is that this demonstrates the overlooking of an obvious educational opportunity by many teachers and points, once again, to a lack of reflection on their RE teaching.

The options from which teachers were to choose in question number 21 were designed, firstly, to ascertain the relative importance of the "religious" as apposed to the educational or professional in teachers' assessment of their pupils' influence on their teaching. The effects of intellectual and chronological age represent an influence which teachers would view, it is maintained, as a professional shaper of their work, while pupils' Biblical/Khr'anic knowledge and stage of faith together, on the other hand, represent teachers' assessment of pupils' "religious" influence on them. Secondly, an analysis of the options chosen attempted to uncover the nuance of significance assigned to two similar yet different influences, that of stage of faith and intellectual age.

Among high school respondents the returns reflecting the influence of intellectual age indicated the following, with a 12 % non-response rate:

low agreement

3

5

10

high agreement

47

23

70% of respondents thus indicated that they were influenced by pupils' intellectual age, a figure that might have been expected from teachers with a sound age-related approach to their teaching, though it is surprising from teachers who have given the type of responses as given to questions 15 and 17. However, it is very similar to the 80% recorded by this group to the question concerning the influence of the "general" development of children. A resolution of this paradox may be found in the difference in terminology used and the meaning assigned to the two terms. The newness of the concept "stage of faith" results in it not being commonly found in either the religious or the educational literature, perhaps making it suspect, and the fact that it deals with an issue as personal and sensitive as faith may make it doubly so. On the other hand the desirability of teaching to intellectual age is well documented, has the ring of sound pedagogy about it and is free from sensitive personal connotations. This point needs to be born in mind throughout this study where the concept of stages of faith is juxtaposed with other less threatening terms, and serves to some extent to soften the criticism that has been leveled at teachers previously in this chapter. It also underscores the points made by Brenda Watson and others referred to in another part of this study concerning the important influence played by an understanding of language in determining how something is understood.

Primary school teachers responded in the following way. with a 6% non-response rate:

low agreement

4

8

24

high agreement

46

12

58% of these respondents thus indicated that they were influenced by this factor. This drop is slightly surprising in view of the expected greater sensitivity of these teachers to the need for differentiated teaching of their pupils, though the figure is higher than one would expect given some of their responses recorded earlier in this chapter.

Question 21 also deals with teachers' evaluation of the first of the "religious" influences on their teaching, namely their pupils' stage of faith. Responses from high school teachers were as follows, with a 12% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
8	15	26	16	23

As expected, in view of the answers to questions 15 and 17 and the explanation given in the previous question, the figures indicating that teachers were influenced by this factor has dropped to 39% when compared to the previous question, but, significantly, those not wishing to commit themselves either way has risen from 10% when dealing with intellectual age to a high 26%, indicating a far greater degree of uncertainty of this concept, providing validation of the remarks made above concerning the probable effects of the newness and sensitivity of the concept.

Primary school teachers responded in the following way, with a 10% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
23	4	32	23	8

31% of primary school teachers were influenced by this factor, but, once again significantly, a similar (high) percentage were not prepared to commit themselves one way or the other. This provides even stronger validation for the contention that

this concept is threatening and/or too new to be accepted. It does not imply that (adult) teachers could not understand the term, once again lending some support to Watson and Brunner's contention, which was dealt with earlier in this study, that familiarity with a concept rather than cognitive ability is an important factor promoting understanding.

When we come to the second of the religious influences on teachers that question number 21 has tested, that of the influence of their pupils' knowledge of their sacred texts, high school teachers responded in the following way, with 12 % non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
5	8	28	34	13

The 47% who were influenced by this factor is much lower than the 69% who were influenced by their pupils' intellectual age, and seems to run counter to the earlier contention that religious influences are more important than educational ones. A likely explanation of this apparent contradiction is that so few pupils display any knowledge of their faith's sacred texts that this is a factor scarcely meriting attention as teachers plan lessons. This may point to the failure of a Bible (and perhaps Khr'anic-centred) approach, characterised as it is by the attempt to transmit and have internalised large amounts of religious information. This would add weight to the point made by Goldman (1965:7) that fewer, selected passages of sacred text need to be dealt with in greater depth. The high figure of 28% who were undecided about the influence of something with which they are probably very familiar, whether they are religious or not, supports the contention made earlier that too little reflection on their teaching appears to be the norm among many RE teachers.

When we come to primary school teachers the answers were as follows, with a 10 % non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
4	4	35	28	19

The 47% who felt themselves to be influenced by this factor is similarly lower than the 58% who felt themselves to be affected by their pupils' intellectual age, while the 35% who were undecided is higher than the figure for high school. Whatever disquieting conclusions one drew from the fact that so many high school teachers are undecided about their pupils' knowledge base, on which presumably they build the development of their lessons, are drawn from the responses of junior school teachers also. The apparent lack of thought as indicated by the greater number of primary school teachers who were undecided is more disquieting given the greater time they spend on RE teaching when compared to the greater emphasis given to examinable subjects in high school.

Among the factors that were suggested in question number 18 as possibly having an influence on teachers the last two, namely training in developmental psychology and having God's insight, tested the relative influence of educational and "religious" influences on RE teachers. The latter is a reformulation of the first question asked in this chapter.

Among high school teachers answers to the question of the perceived influence of training in developmental psychology (most respondents reported earlier in the questionnaire a marked lack in this respect) on teaching were as follows, with a 9% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
20	11	27	20	13

It can be seen from the number of low influence responses (31%) that academic training does not enjoy the higher status one might have wished for it, especially if one focuses on the relative position of the two groups of "20%" responses in this five-point scale. On the other hand such a response may indicate, understandably, an unwillingness by respondents to commit themselves to a judgement based on a type of training to which the majority of them have not been usefully exposed, a point brought home very forcibly by respondents in the interviews. This would also account for the high percentage (27%) of respondents who were not prepared to commit themselves one way or the other.

Primary school teachers answered as follows, with a 22% non-response rate:

low agreement			high agreement	
19	12	8	8	31

There was a higher percentage of respondents who indicated that they were influenced positively by this factor (39%) compared to those who were not (31%). This may be because of a more effective input at the level of teacher training than that received by their high school counterparts. Compared to them one could interpret the smaller percentage (8%) who were not prepared to commit themselves to a definite position as indicating primary school teachers who are more conversant with developmental psychology than are their high school counterparts, even if the answers to questions 15 and 17 indicated that they had no specially high regard for it. This is a position that the sizeable 31% who indicated that they were not influenced by this factor would support. Radical disagreement is clearly indicated by the positioning of the two biggest percentages at either end of the scale.

### 5.3 Responses in the interviews.

Apart from those who were specifically negative about experiences at university or college, only one teacher had anything positive to report concerning input at this level in the teaching of RE, and this involved using parts of an educational psychology course he had done as part of a Bachelor of Education degree, which he had tailored to suit his evangelical convictions.

For the rest, teachers' negative evaluation of the quality of the input they had received at the tertiary level supported the conclusions that were arrived at on an analysis of the questionnaire. This is that they perceived educational influences in general to have had little impact on them. However, this low influence was fostered by the low quality of education at the tertiary level and not only by teachers' greater receptiveness to religious influences. One teacher reported that his teaching was not informed "by even one percent" by his university course; exam papers were marked only on request while students passed "if they wrote their name on top of the page" according to him; the course consisted of "watching slides of this guy's trip to Israel", the "guy" being the lecturer. In this particular respondent's case his teaching was most informed by his own experiences, interpreted in the light of the Bible. The stimulus provided by their own experiences was specifically mentioned by another four teachers, while in similar vein another said that it was often some stimulus found in a video or magazine (itself an experience), mediated by personal conviction, that caused him to teach as he did. This same teacher reported that he had found teaching by way of a "short, sharp" exegesis of scripture to be the most effective method of conducting his lessons, particularly since he believed the second coming of Jesus Christ was near. Though he did not specifically describe his teaching as aiming to proselytize, this aim was clearly the major motivating force behind his and the teaching



of several other respondents at both high school and junior schools.

For yet another his teaching was most informed by a desire to make it existentially relevant to his pupils, or, as he put it, to "avoid a glazed look in kids' eyes". One teacher attempted to realise this same aim by dealing with issues his pupils had researched, though the issues that were actually analysed in the class were vetted and judgements passed on them by himself on the basis of a "sort of Christian perspective". The source of this perspective was not mentioned. His pupils were encouraged to think through the issues for themselves by taking part fully in these discussions, even if they made mistakes, for in this way, he felt, the best learning took place.

In-service training of one type or another was mentioned by three teachers as being of tangible help to them. For one of these this was particularly that provided by team teaching in her school, which was often supplemented by peer supervision. This had the added spin-off of helping her to get over fear of other teachers in the class, thereby benefitting from their assessment of her teaching. But another was critical of the support given by her school, particularly the lack of back-up material. For the other one who was helped it was the input obtained by an educational course provided by the Roman Catholic church, for which she was full of praise: "If I didn't have that guideline I think I would've been lost..... I wouldn't know where to start or what to do", was how she put it. This teacher's allusion to lack of other help graphically reflect views expressed by many respondents to the questionnaire.

Only two teachers reported having had their teaching particularly shaped by their own self-initiated reading, particularly since this helped one of them to get to the "real

truth" behind the "prejudiced source" that was, for him, the Bible.

One teacher identified her personality as a factor determining how she taught, as did her teaching of English, her other teaching subject. Also with reference to personal factors, one teacher reported having experienced "incredible release" from chatting to a friend about a personal problem, which enabled him to teach that much better than he had been able to do before this experience.

Surprisingly, in the light of the trends that emerged on an analysis of the questionnaire, few teachers felt that their churches had much influence on how they taught. One teacher felt that this was because she came from a formal church, the implication being that this would have been unsuitable in the context of her classroom. Only one teacher felt that attendance at church services helped her with the "pure content" of her lessons; she reported this as being of use to her since she did not have the time to plan her teaching of RE. Another believed that both his content as well as his methodology were positively informed by his "Bible-based" church, whose influence, moderated by his personal values and by educationally sound methodology, had effected an improvement on his previous middle-of-the-road approach, with which he believed neither he nor his pupils had been satisfied. He expressed a belief that a definite point of view regarding God and salvation have to be adopted. However, he recognised, without elaborating on it, that the church and the classroom are not the same.

#### 5.4 A summary of the analyses of the questionnaires and of the interviews.

About half of the respondents indicated that they would not utilise a stage theory of the growth of faith in their

teaching since such knowledge is the preserve of God. The stronger disinclination to work along these lines among junior school teachers is doubly surprising given the dynamic nature of the growth of their pupils. The markedly different response to a similar question when the divine was not referred to indicates a paradox in teachers' thinking about RE and "secular" subjects, that reveals itself in a dual approach to teaching in a "secular" subject as opposed to a "religious" subject. This may be based on an acceptance of the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of ongoing revelation, which affirms God's sovereign right to show Himself to those who truly seek Him, no matter what their stage of faith. Revelation 3:20 in the New Testament is a verse which I have heard often used in this way. And, in His omniscience, neither is He bound by the use or quality of teaching techniques. Teachers may believe that a revelation of God is a more likely eventuality in an RE class but an unlikely activity in the Biblical sense in a Maths class, for example, even though there may be desperate cries for help to a Greater Other in such classes! If this is true then in RE classes, many respondents believe, God needs little help in reaching those who truly seek Him.

But even an acceptance of the doctrine of revelation does not necessarily imply that teachers themselves should employ basically different educational strategies to deal with the same problems in RE compared to "secular" subjects, if such a distinction were indeed possible. The false distinction that occurs when teachers themselves think and work differently in these two types of lessons in turn has led, it would appear from the responses, to an unwillingness by teachers to subject their "religious" educational thinking to the same pedagogic scrutiny they apply to their "secular" educational thinking. The importance of the religious influence is maintained in the belief among about three quarters of the respondents that they follow a method enjoined upon them by the sacred text of their faith, while almost exactly the same number of teachers do so

in order to please the divine. The other side of the coin is revealed by the fact that they incorrectly believe themselves in the former instance to be doing no more than what is to be expected from an obedient believer; the author is reminded that no such specific injunction appears in the Bible or Khr'an. This points to a lack of sufficient professional reflection on their teaching.

The comparison between religious and secular influences in one of the sets of questions showed an approximately 10% drop in the importance of the secular influence over that of the religious. This does not imply a lack of dedication among teachers. Nor do these figures necessarily mean that the teachers who have taken part in this study would either claim to or actually employ anything other than that which they perceived to be the best method at their disposal at the same time as wanting to please God. It must be emphasised that this study is not concerned with the diligent dedication to the broad task of education displayed by many RE teachers nor with the very real concern that many of them display for their pupils; in many of the interviews teachers' concern for their pupils was clearly evident. Obviously, their concern and the influence of their religious beliefs are often closely linked. What these responses do display is that even an influence as manifestly "correct" as the recognition of every pupils' individuality receives less support than do religious influences, though it does receive significant support. It may also suggest however, that the Bible-centred approach (and probably a Khr'anic-centred approach as well) has shortcomings which have the effect of lessening the effectiveness of such teachers in areas where they would want to be strong, because it deflects attention away from the help they could be receiving from professional sources.

One of the reasons for this lack of reliance on professional help is the parlous state of professional input at the

tertiary level, excluding in-service training. Argued this way, the low influence of this factor acts in concert with the other influences that have led to the perception among teachers that is emerging from this study. This is that when it comes to RE teaching, the world of academic training and perhaps also educational literature is irrelevant to the task they perform in the classroom, and, understandably, that they need to turn elsewhere for help and inspiration. Yet, while the good intentions of teachers can most often not be doubted, nor the willingness of the religious institutions to which they look for guidance to help them, doubt can be cast on whether that help is always educationally appropriate. And while personal experiences such as a meaningful conversation with a friend can provide a wealth of stimuli that could make a lesson existentially relevant, the very personal nature of such a source of lesson material separates the teacher from the breadth of experience, reflection and balance that is provided by sound research and reading. This can, however, also be provided by listening to the voices of one's pupils, as confirmed by several interviewees. It can also be provided by in-service training, which was so favourably commented on by several interviewees, since this is often provided by teachers "at the chalk face", whose very practical concerns often make them better equipped than academics to deal with the self-same problems encountered by their peers.

The notion that RE teachers are not sufficiently reflective receives support from the large percentage of respondents who indicated that they had been influenced by the method of instruction they had experienced in church, which, as argued earlier in this chapter, showed evidence of a lack of understanding of what was appropriate in school. That from a fifth to a third of respondents did not regard the content of sermons as worthy of application in the classroom is similarly indicative of a lack of reflection, since, it was argued, the contents of sermons could provide a rich source of lesson

material if they were adapted for classroom use. That teachers are not sufficiently reflective is further born out by the more than a third of respondents who could not tell whether their teaching was influenced by their pupils' knowledge of a sacred text.

The present chapter has dealt with the influence on teachers of their perception of divine revelation and sovereignty on the one hand and developmental theory on the other. The following chapter will attempt to ascertain the influence of the second main factor believed to impact on teachers' orientation to the model of changes of faith under investigation. This involves understanding how they relate toward both the concept of development in general as well as their orientation more particularly to development in faith in their pupils.

## CHAPTER 6

### 6. The influence of teachers' perceptions of pupil development on their teaching.

#### 6.1 Introduction.

In this chapter I will analyse teachers' answers to the questionnaire and the points they made in the interviews in order to ascertain the influence on their teaching of their perceptions of their pupils' general development as well as more particularly of their pupils' faith development.

If, on analysis, the answers to the questions dealt with in this chapter reflect the views and practices of teachers who show that they are conversant with what typically constitutes the characteristics of various stages of faith and general growth in children then one can infer either that they are actually using this model or that they are favourably disposed to its potential use. This conclusion would be strengthened if answers showed that teachers not only knew something about characteristic changes in their pupils but also displayed a positive attitude to these changes. This view would obviously be strengthened if similar sentiments were expressed in the interviews. Questions number 7-11, 14, 15d and 24 in the questionnaire were designed to gauge the extent of the influence of both of the factors mentioned above. More particularly questions 7-10 were designed to test teachers' specific knowledge of age-appropriate teaching, while questions 11, 14, 15d and 24 were designed to test their attitude in general to age-related teaching.

#### 6.2 Answers to the questionnaire.

Question number 7 asked teachers when they believed pupils were most likely to imitate admired adults. They often identified more than one phase of schooling as being the most likely ones when this might be expected, hence there was no correlation between the number of respondents and the number of answers given. High and junior school teachers indicated that imitation would occur during the following phases:

	High School	Junior School
Pre-primary	9	19
Junior Primary	31	33
Senior Primary	27	27
Junior Secondary	25	19
Senior Secondary	8	2

According to Fowler, imitation of adults is most likely to occur between the ages of 3 to 7 or 8, which includes the pre- and junior primary phases and ends approximately with the beginning of the senior primary phase. Teachers' lack of understanding of developmental stages is shown by the fact that nearly a third of high school teachers believe that pupils in both the secondary phases would display this tendency, though this figure drops to 21% for junior school teacher, whose matching of behaviour to stage is therefore more accurate: the tailing-off of this characteristic which has already occurred in the senior primary phase of the junior school is probably why they have been as accurate as they have been concerning high school children. Since this is a characteristic that few high school teachers can often have come across, it is surprising that so many of them have identified it as occurring at high school. It is unlikely



that the South African children of whom the teachers questioned in this study have had experience differ so markedly from those with whom Fowler has worked.

Question number 8 asked teachers when they believed it was appropriate to explain the meaning of the term "Kingdom of God". This term was chosen for its high level of abstraction and hence the probable difficulty with which it would be understood by younger children. High and junior school teachers answered in the following way.

	High School	Junior School
Pre-primary	6	14
Junior Primary	22	21
Senior Primary	29	40
Junior Secondary	22	16
Senior Secondary	21	9

Fowler (1981:137) Peatling and Goldman (in Hull 1982:8) concur when it comes to the approximate age when abstract thought has become fully part of the child's everyday life this being at the age of 12 or 13, or the beginning of the junior secondary phase. Yet, since 57% of high school teachers and fully 75% of junior school teachers believe that abstract concepts such as this one can be taught from significantly earlier than this we may assume that some of their teaching during these early phases will not be fully understood by most of the youngsters they instruct. Or it could be argued that they are not at fault and that understanding will take place because the ground has been

prepared for learning by a long careful build-up especially in vocabulary. Since there is much else in all the syllabi that has to be covered this seems less likely. Many of these teachers therefore show by these answers that they are not as conversant with the learning styles of younger pupils as they might be. However, some of the respondents themselves and not just their pupils may not have realized how abstract the concept is and would not have answered as they did had they done so. Given the lack of reliance on accepted learning theory in RE noted in the previous chapter, a lack of knowledge seems a likely interpretation of the data revealed by this question.

Question number 9 asked respondents when they believed it is educationally appropriate to teach the possibility that the parables of the Bible do not describe real events. This question is designed to test teachers' perceptions of when children by and large leave the concrete stage of cognition and begin to think conceptually. This question was chosen because it does not involve a matter that I believe is sensitive in religious circles, so that questions concerning the truth or trustworthiness of the Bible or the person of God are not at stake to cloud the issue. Answers which represent the phase or phases when high and junior school teachers believed this idea should be introduced indicate the following:

	High School	Junior School
Pre-primary	0	9
Junior Primary	10	22
Senior Primary	38	47
Junior Secondary	45	13

A similar conclusion as that which was reached for question number 8 concerning teachers' lack of knowledge of developmental stages can be drawn from this question, though, as phrased, this question deals with the other side of the coin. This concerns the appropriate time when it can be expected that the child will have stopped thinking mainly in concrete terms. The trend continues remarkably similarly for junior school teachers; in this question 78% (75% in question 8) of respondents from these schools believed that concrete thinking ended much sooner than the theory indicates. The 57% of high school teachers who believed that the Kingdom of God could be taught early compare to the 47% who believe that concrete thinking ends sooner than the theory indicates. The comparison between high school and junior school teachers is all the more surprising when one realizes that junior school teachers have the children about whose learning abilities they have made wrong diagnoses actually sitting in their classes without the lack of progress of their pupils in this area of understanding apparently having been noticed.

Question number 10 tested respondents' perception of the age when children are able to imagine what it is like to share the experience of others when the experience is not common to both. Though it is out of the intellectual domain this question is nonetheless dealing with an advanced affective or imaginative ability to which Fowler (1981:139) believes the majority of pre-pubescent children are only beginning to aspire by the end of the mythic-literal stage, or the end of the senior primary phase of schooling. Respondents answered in the following way:

High School

Junior School

Pre-primary	0	3
Junior Primary	11	18
Senior Primary	35	50
Junior Secondary	37	20
Senior Secondary	17	9

Since the empirical evidence suggests that it is likely that some children will be able to perform in this way during the senior primary phase the answers given to this question are much more in line with accepted theory than were answers to previous questions, even though one should note that children in the senior primary phase are only beginning to demonstrate this ability. Only 11% of high school teachers identified children in an earlier phase of schooling as being able to perform in this way, whereas 21% of junior school teachers thought this was possible.

It is worth noting that it is the identification of phases before which it is inappropriate to expect something from a child that is indicative of probably unsuccessful teaching not the permutation of answers associated with the later phases. During all of these latter phases the issues mentioned can adequately be dealt with, given children's ability at those later times.

Question number 11 asked teachers whether or not they associated a level of intelligence, which was identified as being a part of faith, with a particular age. A neutral response in this question was not thought to imply anything other than a neutral or perhaps "don't know" response unlike the neutral response in question 15 which was dealt

with in the previous chapter. Respondents answered in the following ways:

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
High	15	67	9	6	3
Junior	0	48	17	26	9

Fully 82% of high school respondents believed to varying degrees that intelligence as a part of faith was age related. This figure dropped significantly but by this time one can say predictably for junior school teachers, given the high percentage of questionable opinions they gave in answers to questions analysed in previous chapters, to just 48% for teachers at this level. These findings give a new insight since they provide an indication of an overall attitude to the broad issue of the desirability and possibility of matching cognitive and faith development, subsuming the conclusions reached about specific developmental issues that teachers were asked to comment on earlier in this chapter. An analysis of all the questions dealt with in this and the previous chapter confirms the general disparity between the lack of knowledge of and confidence in faith development as one type of learning and teaching theory among teachers. I suggested in the previous chapter that this was possibly because teachers were either unfamiliar with the concept or they felt that by using it they would negate the sovereign work of God.

In question number 14 teachers were asked to assess the value of trying to ascertain pupils' stage of faith. It reflects, as does the previous question, an overall attitude rather than an opinion about a specific item connected with development. The attitude being elicited concerns teachers' opinions about both the desirability and the degree of difficulty of trying to discover the stage of faith in which a child may find him

or herself. However, the thrust of this chapter lies in discovering the knowledge of and hence the degree of educational value that is perceived to lie in knowing something about the stage of faith development a pupil may be in. It does not lie in teachers' assessment of the degree of difficulty of using what amounts to another pedagogic tool (even though the difficulty would effect their use of it). This being so, only the important-unimportant and useful-useless categories mentioned in the questionnaire will be dealt with.

High school and junior school teachers answered on a five-point scale as follows:

	I	II	III	IV	V
High	36	27	16	21	0
Important					
Unimportant					
Junior	42	29	17	8	4
	I	II	III	IV	V
High	38	37	8	17	0
Useful					
Useless					
Junior	45	27	18	5	5

These figures show that a healthy 67% of high school teachers believed that attempts to discover the stage of faith pupils may find themselves in was important, while fully 71% of junior school teachers had a similar attitude. The positive trend in attitude continues as one considers the 75% of high school and 72% of junior school teachers who believed such an attempt to be useful. A resolution of the apparent contradiction between the answers given by junior school teachers in this and the previous question--it appears as if they are positive about a stage theory of faith in this

question but negative about it in question 11-may lie in the tendency of many teachers to regard the religious influences acting on them, especially the desire to please God, as being in some instances in opposition to the educational influence, particularly as it is represented by stage theory. In this respect the use of the word "intellectual" in question 11 may suggest that reason is more important than revelation and cause a negative response. This may be especially true since, in question 11, no linking of God with faith is made, a link, it is suggested, that many teachers of RE who are personally religious, and who are in the majority of respondents, would want to see. Question 14 on the other hand carries no such negative baggage.

Question number 15d is the last of the attitudinal questions and is concerned, as was the previous question, with teachers' perceptions of the desirability or otherwise of attempting to identify the stage of faith in which pupils may find themselves. It suggests, however, that the intensely personal nature of pupils' beliefs makes it an illegitimate subject of teachers' concern. No suggestion is made that God may in some way be affected by teachers attempting this identification. To this assertion high and junior school teachers responded in the following way:

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
High	3	26	16	44	11
Junior	17	13	9	48	13

The fact that this question does not refer to the divine since it is not God but pupils who may be affected negatively, may be responsible for the fact that similar low figures of only 29% of high and 30% of junior school teachers were in various states of agreement that this was indeed a subject best left

alone. In other words the absence of what could be construed as a suggestion that working with a faith stage means "sharing the turf" with God may therefore account for the relatively high figure, in comparison to the answers to question 11, of 55% for high and 61% for junior school teachers who believe to various degrees that teachers should involve themselves in this area of their pupils' experience of faith. When it was suggested that this could involve some competition with God as it was in question 15 a, which was dealt with in the previous chapter, then the answers dropped by some 10% of those who thought using a model of the stage development of faith to be one to be recommended. The questions were similar, the difference being that God was mentioned in only one of them.

#### 6.3 Responses in the interviews.

In all cases teachers were asked whether or not they perceived the children they taught as having passed through any discernable phases or stages in the way they attempted to apprehend truth, and how their perception of these changes affected their teaching style.

Children in the junior secondary phase and earlier were emotionally superficial, or display a "shallow emotional level" as one teacher described it; at her school they were either "immersed" in Christianity or very unfeeling towards the Christian faith. These emotions mainly revolved around themselves and their own interests. This single-mindedness means that they do not have a broad perspective; they are "narrow-minded in the way they see things", as one teacher put it. This shallowness also means that they are quickly enthusiastic, as many teachers reported, and move easily into and out of even strongly stated beliefs, sometimes with bewildering rapidity. One teacher described how one standard five girl "was a strong Christian, now she's suddenly an



atheist". Another reported that "they don't take preaching to heart". This shallowness, it was suggested by one teacher was because children at this stage do not reason their way to belief or unbelief but rely rather on emotion to guide them; they are less able to make logical connections and continuity of thought is lacking. While they do not reason as much as they will do later neither do they reflect on their experiences and thinking, one teacher believed, taking a point of view well known to readers of Fowler and cognitive theorists such as Brunner and Ausubel. While they are able to recognise examples of concepts like good and evil they are typically unable to provide reasonable explanations of their origin and development nor to define them adequately. The lack of a reasoning component in their path to faith also results, it was suggested, in these children being easily influenced, right down to the pre-primary level. Another teacher said, "they don't even realise the things they do", to explain how easily, through lack of reflection on their actions, children at this age hurt each other. This lack of reflection on one's actions is a point well documented by Fowler and others, pointing, together with the other opinions mentioned above, to observations by teachers that accurately reflect the characteristics of children's behaviour and belief described by the theory.

Those teachers who used terms such as "shallowness" or similar descriptions were viewing this characteristic negatively in terms of the non-permanence of the learning that would take place, in other words educationally this characteristic presented problems. In contrast to this another teacher speaking out of a more fundamentalist religious perspective interpreted what he termed their "receptiveness" positively describing them as having a "child-like faith". That such different conclusions could be drawn from similar events is a point made in the previous chapter. There it was pointed out that teachers often think differently in RE as opposed to

secular subjects, particularly when divine revelation was believed to be a likely occurrence.

Teaching strategies with these younger children were well matched to the tendency to think concretely and in terms of known experience; group work, dealing with "practicalities" like pocket-money as an example of one of these successful strategies, was employed extensively. The following description of the teaching of one of the parables of Jesus in the New Testament, which illustrates the worth of doing something without wanting material reward demonstrates how well in general teachers matched teaching strategy with the ability of their pupils. This teacher came from a conservative Christian background.

"I try and relate. . . like we were doing today about the Pharisees and the Saduccees praying out in the open.... and.... we sort of demonstrated that by (my) going up to someone and giving them some sweets. ... literally gave this kid some Smarties....and that sort of thing and made sure everyone in the class saw it. So, taking the concept from the Bible and then putting it almost into their language then going back and saying look, this is what they did and this is what Jesus said".

This teacher has described in these few sentences a number of important teaching concepts that are entirely age-appropriate: in the first two instances she has realised that while most of the Bible is understandable by adults some or much of it has to be made accessible to her Std 3's, choosing to do so by using a concrete "hands on" method of explanation that physically involved a number of children in her class. This represented a type of drama. And, to make sure that there remained no lingering misapprehensions, she revised the main points of the story. Drama as an example of an appropriate

concrete or "hands on " activity in the classroom was used a great deal by many other teachers, especially with the more spontaneous younger high schoolers, in addition to all the junior schoolers.

Story-telling also featured prominently as a teaching tool with junior school teachers. One teacher recounted how she attempted to make a story in which lepers featured meaningful to her Std 3's:she gave them a background to leper colonies telling her pupils how they were treated and then asked them to personalize the story by imagining what it was like to be a leper, 'to encourage them to think through the issue of what it feels like to be ill-treated. She did accept, however, when questioned, that she had erred in believing that her pupils could ever empathize with lepers, since being a leper was totally outside their experience. Later, in answer to a question concerning the different teaching styles that are appropriate for junior and senior primary pupils she spoke for a long time without seeming to come to a conclusion with which she herself was satisfied. Eventually she came to a point where she seemed to be satisfied by saying "every teacher might follow a different approach....though we're all aiming for the same thing, we might just carry it out differently". I suggest that this vagueness points to a lack of knowledge of the distinctive teaching styles appropriate to the two phases in the junior school.

Notwithstanding the last example quoted, all of the above is significant in that it reflects an excellent matching of teaching practice with the ways in which children at different ages learn best.

The perceived lack of ability of these youngsters to understand higher levels of abstraction led most teachers to approach with caution more abstract topics such as the Kingdom of God, which was dealt with in the questionnaire, though most

felt that they were "too heavy" or too difficult to be dealt with at all below the junior secondary phase. This could only be done if such information was "made accessible" to such youngsters as one teacher put it. If the teacher were to "practically move towards it....it's a term one would have to build up to" by approaching it from the familiarity of their known experience, then understanding could take place, one teacher believed. Another reported that unless he "cotton-wooled" as he put it the beginning of the lesson, the rest of it was doomed to failure. This is a similar thought to the one expressed by Watson (1987:159-160) and others, who believe that it is only lack of experience with language proficiency, and not an inability to conceptualise, that prevents younger children from reaching understanding of even complex issues. In contrast to this is the position held by Dewey (1974) and others who maintain the importance of having lived through something, in order truly to understand it and the language used to describe it. Yet I believe that it is possible for even quite young junior school pupils to have a working knowledge of many experiences and emotions, by which is meant the ability to distinguish them quite accurately from similar but different emotions or experiences without actually having lived through them. This is possible because the child is able to imagine what such experiences feel like by comparing them to similar ones that have been lived through. That imagination has the power to perform in this and other ways was reputedly recognised by Albert Einstein (1964), who is quoted as having stated that imagination is more important than knowledge.

If we turn our attention to teachers' comments concerning the end of the junior secondary phase and into the senior secondary phase then strong agreement was noted concerning the substance and timing of the "enormous jump" in thinking that takes place in the high school at puberty. Pupils in standards seven and eight begin seriously to question for the

first time many of the points of view that they previously have not challenged, such as the truthfulness of the Bible or many ethical positions held by the Church. In short there was a major increase in argumentativeness at this time and some teachers reported a great deal of difficulty, according to the sort of community in which they were teaching, in eliciting even a neutral response to RE. One teacher believed that this had to do with adolescents wanting to establish their independence, while another believed it was because pupils were now starting to think far "deeper" and to face issues in a more "mature" way. By this she meant that they were starting to deal with issues on a "more analytic level" whereas previously, as another teacher put it, they believed "blindly".

The conversation with another teacher is interesting in its illumination of the dichotomy that exists in some teachers' minds between, on the one hand, reason, which includes educational theory, and on the other the response by pupil and teacher alike to a revelatory God, in other words an affective response. This also became evident from an analysis of the questionnaire. He was contrasting the receptiveness of juniors with the desire of seniors to reason things out. This teacher had what might be termed a fundamentalist or very conservative religious background. (The issue being dealt with at this point is not of course the relative merits and demerits of reason and revelation).

"You can't reason out God. He's beyond reason. "  
[Quest:Does He include reason?....Can reason take us toward God without necessarily leading us to Him? Or are faith and reason two separate things?]  
"It's true that Paul reasoned with the Greeks with the philosophers, but in the end....in the end we either believe or we don't believe and no amount of persuasion...."

At this point his sentence tailed off, the train of his thought to be followed, however, by the story in the New Testament of Lazarus and the rich man, who pleaded for God to send Abraham to warn his relatives of Hades, a strategy, the Bible explains, which would not work. To explain the significance of the story he added

"Even if someone comes back from the dead, some won't believe".

Yet, to be fair, when he was pressed for a resolution of the perceived dichotomy between reason and revelation he was concerned that we should not put "sharp divisions" between reason and faith, for he believed that someone could come to faith through reason. Conviction, however, was lacking.

It was the ability to analyse, one teacher believed, which includes analysis or reflection of oneself, which equipped pubescents with the ability to deal with concepts, principles and values. At the same time there is growth in insight which permits pupils in the latter half of the high school to notice things, such as the falling away from faith by others, which younger ones miss. These advances permitted the holding of discussions on a conceptual level, such as the existence of God, as opposed to giving pupils only information. They want to see things proved, to reason things through. One teacher believed that it was sound practice to teach even highly conceptual issues such as the Kingdom of God so that it will be familiar later, when "everything will fall into place" even if they do not understand it at the time. No mention was made of a build-up through proper understanding of language nor of the use of points of familiarity on which to build in order to achieve understanding. We are warned by Dewey (1974) of the danger of pupils becoming over-familiar with information so that it loses the power to enthrall and

stimulate. by Goldman (1965:45-46) and Fowler (1981:135) of the difficulty of teaching topics with a high degree of conceptualisation to younger children where there are no concrete analogies, and by Watson of the role played by proficiency in language in promoting learning. Teachers interviewed in general agreed with the sentiments of these writers and would not have agreed with this particular teacher's point of view. This, therefore, presents us with the only significant departure at the high school level from what is generally regarded as appropriate teaching theory, and confirms that when high school teachers approach teaching from an educational perspective they, like their junior school counterparts, report sound teaching techniques.

One teacher in exactly the type of community in which argumentativeness and rejection were typical reported a response quite different, and here again we see effective, age-appropriate teaching approached from a sound pedagogic foundation. He saw such a "well of spirituality" in adolescents that he did not believe they are irreligious; rather it is organised religion they reject at this time which they see as existentially irrelevant, citing long, boring synagogue services as an example. (At his school he ran a course entitled "How to survive synagogue"! ). The remedy for him is to start with the children's interests and concerns, a methodology that many teachers believe to be effective, and that will be described further in the last chapter of this study under the heading "child-centred education". In the same vein another teacher believed that teachers should deal with topics "within their experience field", another chose to deal as much as possible with topics that occur in the school such as theft, and yet another that teachers had to work to make highly conceptual topics such as the Kingdom of God "accessible" to younger minds in the high school. The significance of these points lies in the fact that teachers' comments reflected sound, age-appropriate

teaching strategy. This is in line with the comments referred to in the previous paragraph.

One respondent explained why he believed many children reject religion in early high school. For him it is linked to the fact that while many children are becoming sexually active at this stage of their lives and all are becoming sexually aware "organised" religion has many taboos in this area. He has found that many of his pupils regard themselves as being spiritual, though he was careful to accept definitions of spirituality that included non-religious ones. For these reasons he believed that counter culture religion seems to be more acceptable to them. On the other hand he believed junior school children were very believing or "animistic" as he put it.

Standard six's, like those in junior school who share their mode of cognition and meaning-making, are still rather more interested in doing things than on reflection. An example of an unexamined, child-like view of God came from one teacher who reported that her standard six pupils depicted God in drawings as "....up there, a pure white, golden, shining person. We're down here, looking up at Him....sitting in the clouds". She taught at a school serving what she termed an underprivileged community. One notices incidentally the use of drawings, which teachers used a great deal in this standard and lower ones, as an example of a "hands-on" learning experience that is wholly appropriate to this age group.

Standard six's were found to be markedly less independent than they will be after standard eight and constantly want recognition.

6.4 A summary of analyses of the questionnaires and the interviews .



Analysis of the questionnaires often revealed a poor matching of appropriate RE teaching to age in the high school as well as the junior school. This applied particularly to the appropriate time when teachers can start instruction at the abstract level. While this is generally true the effects of teaching incorrectly in the area of knowledge of developmental at the junior school level may have more important and more long-lasting results than what happens at high school, pointing to a greater need for change at this level. The lack of learning which must have followed these incorrect diagnoses has not, apparently, been noticed.

The reason for these teachers employing such poor teaching strategies probably lies, in addition to the comments made in the previous chapter, to the lack of linkage in their thinking between, in general terms, intelligence, age and faith. This is because intellectual activity is likely to be seen as in some way inimical to revelation by God. Despite this, the more positive attitude that high school teachers have to the subject of a stage theory of faith demonstrate that they would have a more positive attitude to increasing their knowledge about the concept, especially if it can be viewed as value-neutral in terms of their personal beliefs concerning the acts of God. Recognition of the crucial importance of teachers' perceptions of their opposition or lack of it to the will of the divine is useful on two counts: firstly it resolves the anomaly of teachers perceiving an involvement in faith development positively when other perceptions of its involvement have been negative, and, secondly, it confirms conclusions reached in the previous chapter concerning the greater influence of the divine/religious over that of strictly educational influences in the same teachers.

That religiously-neutral and religiously-sensitive perspectives exist among teachers and result in differing analyses being made of the same phenomena was demonstrated

graphically by the different ways the receptivity/gullibility of young children was viewed. These very different analyses encapsulate the differences that one believes suggest themselves from an assessment of many of the answers in this and the previous chapter. This is that teachers responded differently to similar questions when assessing them from what they saw as a religious as opposed to an educational standpoint. When perceiving there to be opposition between the two influences, they most often chose to obey God rather than man.

In contrast to the negative remarks made above about the poor match of teaching style with age that suggested themselves from an analysis of the questionnaires, the sometimes very accurate, detailed and open way interviewees discussed the various stages in which they found their pupils indicated that teachers could embrace the stage model of faith as a teaching tool, but only under certain conditions. One of these is that the model should not be seen as working in opposition to God, a condition that was probably realised in the value-free environment of the interviews. The seemingly successful age-appropriate teaching that was described suggests the same, and confirms the trend noted earlier: when RE teachers are being guided by educational principles the practice of their craft as indicated by their responses, is generally sound. This is in no way a comment, however, on the quality and appropriateness of their care for their pupils on a personal level.

This chapter has explored the effect of teachers' attitude to changes in faith in their pupils on their orientation to the model that serves as the basis of this study. We turn our attention in the following chapter to the third factor that is believed to have a significant impact on teachers' orientation

to the model. This is their perception of changes in faith within themselves.

## CHAPTER 7.

### 7. The influence of teachers' own development on teaching.

#### 7.1 Introduction.

This chapter will analyse the questionnaire and the interviews to discover the possible influence on teachers of the third factor that is believed to influence their teaching. This is their perceptions of their own general development as well as more particularly their faith development, where they perceive the latter to have occurred.

The responses to the questions which are examined in this chapter are designed to ascertain whether teachers perceived the passage of their own faith pilgrimage in a positive or negative light. This question was posed in the belief that if teachers reveal themselves to be positively disposed to changes in faith in themselves then one can infer that they would be similarly disposed to change in the pupils they teach and are likely in the future to use, if they do not do so already, the model of faith change being dealt with in this study. Questions 12-15 b, c and e and 24-27 were designed to gauge the nature of this influence.

#### 7.2 Answers to the questionnaire.

Question number 12 asked respondents whether or not they were able to identify any turning points in their attempts to make sense of their own experiences, apart from conversion if they were of the Christian faith. 55.2% of the high school group reported that they could identify such turning points; by inference one can assume that they would accept the possibility of similar significant turning points in the lives of their pupils, if they accept that adult experiences can be replicated in children. 26.3% were not able to do so, though

this does not mean that they would be negatively disposed to change. It merely means that they cannot identify the type of change being referred to. In comparison to the answers to many of the other questions in this study a very large 18.4% of respondents did not offer a response, either because they did not understand the question, an unlikely possibility since the question is short and contains no ambiguities, or, more likely, they did not want to deal with this question since it had negative, possibly painful connotations. By inference one assumes that, this being the case, this group would regard the possibility of finding turning points in their pupils in the same negative light. Surprisingly, in the light of conclusions drawn in earlier chapters, none of the junior school respondents responded in such a way. A much larger 84.6% of junior school teachers could identify such turning points and only 15.4% were not able to do so. The total number of teachers who could identify definite turning points is, therefore, high.

The conclusion that could be drawn by inference from these figures is that junior school teachers are more likely to look for and find one or a few steps in the progression of faith in their pupils than their high school counterparts, since this is a development that the majority of them have noted in themselves. None of the respondents expressed a negative attitude to changes in themselves, which was to be expected given the fact that previous chapters have alerted us to the importance of a reference to God. Question 12 is neutral in this respect since no reference is made to God. It was noted in chapter six that teachers in both grades of school tended to distance themselves from influences that were perceived as being in some way inimical to the divine will and the ways in which God most often gives expression to it. Given this point, it is because no mention is made of God that probably the most correct way of interpreting the answers to this question lies in acknowledging the importance of the

neutrality of the data vis-a-vis the will of God, which explains the small number of nil returns from junior school teachers but leaves unexplained the large number of high school teachers who did not respond. The wording of this question makes it plain that it is dealing with the development of faith, though it does not actually use the term, and follows after another which explicitly does so.

Junior school teachers here present themselves as being less restrictive than they did in previous chapters. A resolution of this apparent contradiction could be seen in the contention that junior school teachers differ in one important respect from high school teachers, and that is in their relationship with their pupils. I believe this difference lies in the greater emphasis placed by high school teachers on their transmission and their pupils' understanding of the contents of the subjects they teach. On the other hand, their junior school counterparts place relatively more emphasis on their overall relationship with the children they teach. They inherently empathise to a greater degree their pupils' affective development and therefore they acknowledge the changes to which the children they teach are frequently and naturally subject. This being so it is possible to argue that their frequent exposure to more observable change makes them, and not their high school counterparts, more ready to recognise it when they see it in others and in themselves, and to regard it as a normal part of human development. Yet, if this were true, it did not lead to them replying affirmatively to previous questions where the same conditions could be seen to apply. This calls the explanation just given into doubt, leaving the anomaly of responses by the two sets of teachers unexplained. The generally shorter exposure to tertiary education of junior school teachers provides no answer to this difficulty.

Yet a further reason for hesitation is provided by the answers given and the conclusions reached to the next question.

Question number 13 followed from the previous one in asking whether or not the turning points referred to above sometimes served as catalysts that ushered in stages of faith; respondents were, therefore, now specifically directed toward faith stages. Responses from high school teachers were as follows, with a 12% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
33	48	7	0	0

From the above it can be seen that the high figure of 81% of high school respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that these turning points ushered in a changed stage of faith (the term "stage of faith" was specifically used), while none expressed any degree of disagreement. By comparing this answer with the very much lower one given in question 12 we can confirm that the high school teachers in the previous question were stating no more than that they were not able to identify such turning points in their own lives, and not denying that such turning points had or could take place. In other words, had they taken place in their own lives, they would very likely have ushered in a changed stage of faith.

Junior school teachers answered as follows, with a 4 % non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
19	61	12	4	0

A high figure of 80% of respondents expressed similar beliefs to their high school counterparts, from which one can draw the

same conclusions as were drawn above. This finding also strongly supports the conclusions reached by Fowler and others.

Question number 15 b asked whether or not teachers' psychological training, or lack of it, had affected their ability to identify the stages of faith their pupils may be in, by asking teachers to respond to the statement that lack of this type of training made such a diagnosis impossible. High school teachers answered as follows, with a 2 % non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
3	15	10	55	15

While 18% of respondents agreed to various extents that the lack of psychological training did prevent use of this model and 10% indicated a neutral response, 70% of these respondents expressed various degrees of agreement that their lack of training did not prevent such an identification taking place. Even though respondents were not stating that they would use this model, the agreement expressed represents at least a tacit recognition that a stage-like development of faith could occur and even that it had been dealt with, which, however, may be seen at first glance to represent a somewhat different attitude when compared to the prevailing sentiments expressed in chapter six and seven. A resolution of this apparent dichotomy is seen to lie in the same way previous potential dichotomies were resolved, namely the absence of a perceived clash with the will of God. This, together with a reference to teacher training, with which respondents would be familiar and therefore at ease, would place this question firmly on neutral ground in relation to the will of God, and prevented them from perceiving that a positive response represented competition with God.



Junior school teachers answered as follows, with a 2 % non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
0	17	9	68	14

An even higher 82% of respondents in this group concurred with their high school counterparts in recognising the strong probability of their being able to identify the stage of faith their pupils may be in, even though, like them, junior school teachers may have had little or no formal psychological training. That they lacked anything approaching adequate teacher training in specifically RE was brought home with much force in the interviews, as indicated in a previous chapter, but this lack does not appear to have constrained respondents in this particular area of interaction with the pupils they teach, probably because obvious change is so ubiquitous in the junior school. The issue being dealt with in this question is also neutral where God is concerned.

Question number 15 c asked teachers to respond to the statement that identification of faith stages was too time-consuming for the results it produced. As with the previous 3 questions this question was designed to be value neutral insofar as perceived competition with God is concerned. High school teachers answered as follows, with a 12% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
0	16	24	47	11

58% of these teachers indicated that it was not too time-consuming, 16% thought that it was so, while, compared to the

previous question. the significantly larger 24% who gave a neutral response may well have done so since, not having tried to incorporate a stage theory of development into their teaching, they had no idea of the time involved in its use. Having established therefore the reasonable probability that these particular answers represent true neutrality and do not mask a stance that may favour agreement, the 16% who believed that it did need too much time to use is thrown into relief and shown to be small.

Junior school teachers answered as follows, with a 12 % non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
9	13	13	46	17

To varying degrees almost two thirds or 63% of these teachers did not regard its use as too time-consuming, this high figure supporting the conclusion drawn earlier, that the use of a stage theory of development is sometimes seen as clashing with the will of God and sometimes not, and that where no clash with God's will is perceived, it stands a better chance of being incorporated into educational planning, at least on a theoretical level. Of the remainder, only 13% took a neutral stance, while a rather larger 22% agreed that it was too time-consuming to use.

Question number 24 required teachers to indicate how they would respond to pupils' dissatisfaction with RE. More specifically it attempted to ascertain whether they would sometimes change either their teaching content and method on the one hand, in other words a professional change, or whether they would sometimes consider rethinking their own beliefs on the other, in other words a personal belief change. The frequency with which the latter course would be contemplated

by teachers compared to the former would give an indication of their attitude to not only changes within themselves but, by inference, to pupils rethinking their own beliefs. An acceptance by teachers of a reformulation of personal belief as a response to problems in the classroom, or for whatever other reason, implies a positive attitude to the possibility of change in others, including their pupils. This in turn implies a more ready acceptance of a stage theory of faith development, as part of their repertoire of solutions to problems that arise in the teaching of RE.

To the question concerning the frequency with which they rethink their own beliefs as a possible means of dealing with pupil dissatisfaction with RE, high school teachers answered on a five point scale as indicated below, with 20% abstentions. This large number is due to the fact that in a previous question teachers were asked only to respond to this question if their pupils did not enjoy RE.

Low agreement			High agreement	
32	21	21	16	10

To varying degrees 53% of respondents who answered indicated that this was a course of action with which they could not agree, while exactly half of this number indicated that they sometimes did rethink their own beliefs. This negative response represents a confirmation of earlier findings since a change in beliefs is likely to be associated with unfaithfulness to God. If such a change were linked in the minds of teachers to the use of stage theory it is likely to lead to its rejection, in this case by over half of all teachers.

The figures for junior school teachers are as follows: 16% of respondents did not reply to this question:

Low agreement

High agreement

46

11

16

16

5

To varying degrees 57% of these respondents who answered did not usually consider rethinking their own beliefs as a solution to pupil dissatisfaction. Adding to the conclusions reached for high school teachers, this indicates a group who were less likely to reflect on their own beliefs than were their high school counterparts where opposition to God is perceived to be involved, and indicates a group less likely to accept that their pupils might do the same. A stage theory of faith development would therefore be less likely to be used in planning teaching. When compared to their high school counterparts a slightly higher 21% did sometimes rethink their beliefs.

The next part of this question directed teachers' attention away from matters of personal belief to professional issues, in requiring them to indicate whether or not they agreed that they sometimes changed their teaching methods as well as the content of their lessons as a response to pupil dissatisfaction. Though these two responses were dealt with separately they will be treated as one since together they are felt to represent a professional response that contrasts with the response from personal belief. On the same five point scale as above, high school teachers answered as follows, with 10% abstentions:

Low agreement

High agreement

2

2

27

50

9

These figures indicate a manifestly contrary trend to the one noted above in that only 4% of those from this group do not sometimes change their teaching methods and or the content of their lessons to one degree or another to counter pupil dissatisfaction with their RE lessons. One acknowledges,

however, that a willingness to change professionally is no more than what one would expect most teachers to claim for themselves; whether they would actually do so is another question entirely, but this applies to the previous question also. What is significant is the extent to which the two percentages differ. Clearly matters of personal belief are far less likely to change than are professional matters; this is something one would expect. What is disquieting, however, is the large number of teachers who by inference would not reflect on what the interviews clearly showed to be by far the single greatest source by which their teaching is informed, which is their own beliefs. The amount of progress in their teaching of RE that is likely to take place is, therefore, called into question.

The figures for junior school teachers were as follows, with 9% of respondents not replying to this question:

Low agreement			High agreement		
10	15	32	22	12	

The trend to a more conservative approach noted earlier among these teachers is continued in that the figure for those who would not change to various degrees their method or content is up on the high school figure to fully 25%, yet the other trend to being more ready to change approach rather than belief also follows the high school trend.

Question number 25 focused on the extent to which teachers believed themselves to be mostly under the control of a power or powers outside themselves that was described in the question as rendering them relatively ineffectual in directing the course their lives will take. Those teachers who have a personal faith, it was assumed, would interpret this power as God. This interpretation is reinforced by the many references in the "comments" section that followed this question that

this power is not an impersonal force but a personal God. It would therefore be the outworking of the divine will which would render them mostly powerless in both their religious and their professional lives. If they are thus relatively powerless in their own lives then they would be similarly powerless in changing the lives of those they teach and by inference they would be uninterested in incorporating a stage theory of faith development into their teaching.

This question therefore focuses on the practical issue of whether teachers would have any chance of success if they intervened in the process of the development of faith, in the light the omnipotence of God. On the other hand the questions discussed in chapter six focused on the advisability of teachers' intervening in the lives of their pupils in the light of a possible perception that this was properly the terrain of God and that teachers would therefore be interfering with the outworking of the divine will were they to incorporate a stage theory of faith development in their teaching. Both questions were therefore testing the effect of religious considerations on whether or not a stage model of growth of faith is likely to be used.

To the statement that people are relatively powerless, high school teachers replied as follows, with no abstentions:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
5	10	10	36	39

75% of these respondent indicated varying degrees of agreement that people are not powerless in directing the course their lives will take, and only 15% thought that people are, implying a freedom for men and women to act on their own despite an acknowledgement of God's power. This further implies that these teachers would feel free to use an approach

to RE teaching such as a stage model of faith development, if they so chose. This, however, may seem to run counter to the trend noted earlier concerning the distance that many teachers kept between themselves and this model when it was perceived as being in some way in opposition to the will of God. This apparent contradiction can be resolved simply by realizing that teachers' perceptions of their freedom from the power of God in no way implies that they are must therefore be positive about a stage or any other theory, since they would also be free to reject that as well.

When we turn to junior school teachers however, we note the following answers, with a 4% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
8	30	8	14	36

Here we find the greater conservatism continuing, with a significantly large 38% of respondents indicating varying degrees of belief in their lack of freedom in the face of a power outside themselves, that, in the main, they would also have identified as God. Compared to the figure for high school teachers a much smaller 50% believed to varying degrees that they were free to choose the course their lives would take. The inference is that 40% of these respondent had what can be described as a fatalistic view of their personal histories, their dependance on the power and will of God implying that they would be less likely to introduce a stage model of faith development, were this to be specifically suggested to them. This is likely since answers to questions dealt with in earlier chapters strongly suggested an opposition to this specific approach to RE teaching as there was often a suspicion that it ran counter to God's will.

Question number 26 required teachers to indicate their degree of concern over changes their belief system might undergo by responding to the assertion that such changes were indicative of a wavering faith. Many comments were added in the space provided, indicating a high degree of interest as well as a realization that answers needed to be clarified since the question was capable of being interpreted in different ways. However, the question was deliberately kept imprecise and incapable of being answered with accuracy without the addition of comments, in order to force respondents to tick spaces that reflected a consideration more of an emotional response, the consideration providing the reasoning foil to the feelings that inevitably accompany such an issue. An attempt was thus made to elicit an answer that combined intellectual with emotional considerations. High school teachers answered as follows to the statement that they should worry when their beliefs change since such change indicates a wavering faith, with a 9% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
10	14	12	25	30

55% did not agree that changes in belief represented a wavering faith, the comments that were added explaining that change, when it involved growth and application of faith, was a normal part of one's response to the Almighty. 24% of respondent on the other hand agreed that change did represent a wavering faith; these teachers, it is inferred, would equate steadfastness of faith with lack of change and would view with some suspicion a stage theory of faith development and would therefore not easily incorporate it into their teaching. Though much smaller than 61%, one out of every four teachers nonetheless represents a significant proportion.



Junior school teachers answered as follows, with a 4% non-response rate :

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
8	12	8	52	16

68% of these respondent did not equate a changing faith with a wavering faith. The larger percentage might have come as a surprise since junior school teachers had hitherto shown themselves to be religiously more cautious than their high school counterparts, and, as a consequence, where the two can be shown to be connected, more cautious educationally. The comments that were added, however, showed these teachers to be interpreting change as growth, but high school teachers did the same. A smaller 20% assigned a negative interpretation to a faith that changed, with the same implications as above. The reversal of the trend to greater conservatism among these teachers remains unexplained.

Question number 27 was the last of the questions that dealt with teachers' perceptions of their own faith development. This question required teachers to respond to the assertion that they should welcome a change in their beliefs since it could indicate personal growth. The explanation given above explaining the imprecise phrasing of the question applies here also. High school teachers answered as follows, with a 3% non-response rate:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
23	41	20	3	10

The 12% who disagreed with this assertion are comparable to the 25% of high school respondents dealt with in the previous question who believed that change represented a wavering

faith. For this much smaller percentage of teachers change in themselves is something they would not readily contemplate, nor by inference is this something they would welcome in their pupils and plan for in their teaching.

Amongst junior school teachers the responses were as follows, everyone venturing an answer:

strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree
27	38	4	23	8

The much larger 31% of these teachers who did not welcome change represents a return to the trend noted earlier that junior school teachers are more cautious in their reaction to change in themselves, and by inference to change in their pupils.

### 7.3 The interviews.

The interviews showed there to be two periods when change in the way the meaning world was understood occurred with more force than any other time, and these matched closely two of the times which the research of Fowler (1981:173) indicated they would occur. The first, which was at the same time the most commonly identified turning point in thinking took place between the years seventeen and nineteen, that is, the time when respondents left home to study elsewhere. One respondent agreed with Fowler by identifying as the reason for these changes the fact that she no longer had her family as a frame of reference and was forced for the first time in her life to consider alone her understanding of the social reality that confronted her. This was described as a period of intense questioning of not so much values but of beliefs or doctrine. One interviewee spoke also of his late high school period as a time of significant change, though in his case it did not

coincide with leaving home but of finding friends who shared similar interests. As with those who had left home, however, he too had found a frame of reference outside the family at a time when the family's influence markedly decreases. It was this combination of circumstances that made these interviewees ready to embrace new viewpoints. One other of the respondents who identified a major shift as having occurred also at this time associated it with a time spent as a helper at a youth camp for underprivileged children. At this camp he perceived for the first time that a "particular brand of religion was being forced down children's throats", causing him to develop what he described as a "hard" attitude to religion in general, and to be far more cynical about doctrine or "dogma", as he advisedly put it. Previous to this he described himself as having being "quite religious in my own way".

A similar degree of change but one moving into rather than out of religious faith was described by the following two respondents as having taken place at the same time. For the first one this occurred when, on arriving at university, the contact he made with the student YMCA led to a commitment to Jesus Christ and a conversion to the Christian faith, even though he had come from a Christian background. This experience and the teaching he received came to be seen on reflection as a confirmation of what up to that time he had "suspected", as he put it, to be the truth. For the second one a similar commitment to God was reported as having taken place at about sixteen years of age, but after this she found herself regressing spiritually, "leading a double life" and "fumbling around" as she put it, sometimes in the Christian group and sometimes not. But in late high school she reported a very definite experience of coming to the realization that she was either going to go very definitely "into the world" or not; on later reflection she interpreted this event as having been the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

The last of the respondents to identify major changes in belief with this particular time in his life described a sequence of events that display a close fit with the case histories described by Fowler (1981:176-179). The change occurred for him when he left home and a strict "fundamentalist" religious upbringing with, as he put it, its narrow, rigid and conservative outlook. Thinking was done on his behalf by his parents, who "thrust" their beliefs on him. No questions that cast doubt on his parents' belief were allowed to be asked. All this changed dramatically when he went to college, where he consciously set about exploring all the belief options that were at his disposal. This was described as a time of "awakening" in his thinking. Realising that reality was not as it had been presented to him he moved away from childhood beliefs, which were very "spiritual" in the sense that much store was set by dreams and visions. The biggest change however was that he could no longer believe that the only way to enter the Kingdom of God was by the laying on of hands by an apostle, when the believer is "sealed by the Holy Spirit", as his former church put it. He no longer believes that one has to work for the soul's salvation by obeying the teachings of Jesus, but that salvation comes by grace alone. The truth of Scripture was therefore not in question for this respondent, but rather its interpretation. The formal break came when he was married in another, less fundamentalist church, but this had been "on the cards" since he had left school, and even before, as he was the only child in his home ever to have asked pertinent questions. He willingly acknowledged that he could change in some other way in the future, supporting the contention that teachers who could identify faith change in themselves would probably be positively disposed to such changes in their pupils.

This was a time for change in areas of life other than concerning belief; one other respondent reported a change away from the "reckless" attitude particularly to work that he had

had while at school. In the army and early on at university he had time to "reflect" as he put it about the negative attitude he had had while at school, and in so doing began to develop a more mature attitude to life. He reported that marriage had had a similar maturing effect.

The four respondents who could identify a crisis in their lives, the second of the turning points identified by Fowler, in two cases a divorce in the family and the other two the death of a loved one, associated these events with the times in their lives when, on later reflection, the most significant change in their thinking took place. The reflection of one respondent on her "crisis" (author's interpretation of the event) of conversion, led to an inward look which resulted in her incrementally rejecting her sense of limitedness and slowly coming to a new understanding of her own self worth. "I no longer had to prove myself. . . . "she said, "since this is the way God has made me". With this change she also came to a new realization of the value of her parents, based not on what they did, but on who they were.

One of the respondents who experienced the failure of her marriage interpreted the event, or "milestone" as she put it, as precipitating a movement toward a maturing of her Christian faith, which she described as being characterised by an increasing recognition of "grey" areas of morality. There was also an increasing awareness of the extent of the complexity of relationships, including her relationship with herself; she described this as a time leading to an upward and an inward look, as a time of self-discovery. The frequent use of the word "increasing" suggests, and she was conscious of this, that there was an awareness of the importance of process in the development of faith. She recognised that being saved from her former ways to the way of Christ was an ongoing event, whereas before her divorce she had placed all her emphasis on events, especially the initial act of commitment

and salvation "one step, yes or no", as she put it. In this same category she placed an attribute such as being able to forgive, which she believed can seldom be achieved as a one-off event. The second respondent to experience a divorce did so from the perspective not of a wife but from the perspective of a child. For her the changes that she went through were symbolised using the motif of colour, all the principles her mother had taught her and her mother herself being seen as white, but changing to grey afterwards. Whereas before she could not, she is now able to live with the ambiguities, the less-than-perfection that these grey areas represent. Having "come back" as she put it to faith through the doubt that this event occasioned she felt her belief to be more robust and her tolerance of others higher.

Events which go unreported in Fowler as precipitating major change but which were identified as such by three of the seven married female interviewees and three of the ten married male interviewees was their marriage in the case of the males and both their marriage and the birth of their children in the case of the females. One respondent connected her change from a Protestant denomination to Catholicism with her marriage. Once again it was reported that the common denominator binding these very different events together was that they acted as a "catalyst", as one respondent had it, to periods of intense reflection, particularly, with regard to marriage and parenthood. One of the respondents reported that this added a new dimension to her life and extended her as a person, particularly her affective side. Fowler (1981:152) had of course pointed to the crucial importance of reflection, or the standing aside from the flow of events to view them from a distance, as it were, to lead to an appreciation of their real importance. This in a sense was done for one respondent when, in about his mid thirties, he read the main works of the Austrian psychologist Victor Frankl, whom he described as having encapsulated and given coherence to and in this way

firmed his own beliefs. Realising that others thought as he did assisted in this process. The reflection which occurred shortly after the events also led to a new realization of the fragility and preciousness of life when two of the respondents were confronted with the death of loved ones.

With two notable exceptions the degree of change could not be described as being of a radical nature. They consisted rather of a deepening appreciation of the complexity of human relationships and a broadening of their own beliefs to include an increasing acceptance of the legitimacy of the views of others or differing "nuances" of belief. Fowler (1981:199-211) used the word "universalising" to describe the stage of faith when these types of beliefs were characteristic. One respondent described the broadening or growth of her faith in terms of it having "more dimensions" since it had come to incorporate the similar faith experiences of other people with whom she had come into contact. There was also an increasing realization that viewing all moral issues in unrelieved tones of black and white represented a simplistic view of reality. Colour was a motif that was used by a number of interviewees to symbolise both these changes in perceptions of morality as well as of people themselves, with grey representing the ambiguities that came in time to be seen as acceptable if not perfect belief options.

Insofar as the divine is concerned the changes that occurred were also not of a substantial nature, with one exception. They rather took the form of a change of emphasis or nuance of belief, as with two teachers, who came to see the importance of the sovereignty of God, given human suffering and the difficulty of explaining this adequately to their pupils while at the same time holding on to a belief in a God of love. Having come to this realization one teacher reported that he could no longer give "easy, glib" answers to queries from his pupils, as he had done as a young teacher. The respondent

whose faith had been "shaken" as she put it by a divorce expressed a similar sentiment; though she still believed in God her reflection on the event led her to say the following:

".... sure as nuts I don't understand what he's doing. People say far too glibly that it's the will of God....or even far too glibly that He's in control ....(yet) this is still Satan's kingdom that we are living in....ultimately God is in control. So those slick, religious answers...."

Her perception of her increasing maturity was revealed by her rejection of these types of answers, which she said had been typical of her own in the past, but which were now typically expressed by the young high school children she taught. However, her use of the word "ultimately" and her reference to this world as "Satan's kingdom" suggest that she had yet to deal with her belief, still in its latent form, that while God was ultimately in control, He was somehow not immanently in control.

The one exception, who was referred to in the previous paragraph, experienced a truly radical revision of his perception of the nature of God. He reported that as a pre-adolescent and then as a teenager he had had a "casual" relationship with religion, but that it was slowly, in late high school "....when I started taking religion quite seriously....if I were a Christian I'd call it conversion.... finding faith". He described his belief as a "tense, theistic faith" with a strong commitment to practice but accompanied by feelings of guilt since God, who at that stage was perceived as being intimately concerned with his every action, was seen as constantly appraising his performance. There was no reflection on his faith that he could recall. This carried on till his mid-thirties, by which time he had become "uncomfortable" with previous understanding of God, resulting



in his approach becoming much more deistic. God had become "unapproachable". Piaget (1955) and Fowler (1981) would have described this change in terms of the inadequacy of his previous schemata to deal satisfactorily with his new perceptions of reality. Reflecting back on his early period of religious belief he felt that he had been "stupid and childish to be as theistic as I was". Though he pinpointed the period of change as accurately as his mid-thirties he was unable to pinpoint any event which may have precipitated it. Interestingly, he does not regard himself as any less spiritual or religious than he had been earlier.

The status of the Bible and way it was understood, where the Bible was viewed as a significant source of truth, also underwent change. Concomitant with his radically altered view of God the respondent described at the end of the previous paragraph inevitably changed his understanding of the Bible the most radically of all the respondents, knowledge of the divine in the theistic family of religions being so closely linked to a sacred text. Whereas in the past he had viewed the Bible "as if the dictation of God", he now saw it as

"the intuition of spiritual men....infused with a great deal of wisdom....overlaid with the readings and understandings of these spiritual men....who might have read into things....it was filtered through their social context and their needs and aspirations".

Though the Bible was no longer regarded as revelatory in his previously understood sense and therefore came to have less force than it had then, the writings it contains were nonetheless still regarded highly for all the wisdom they display. Another teacher was able to claim that while she could no longer take the Bible "at face value" as she put it she was at the same time able to maintain her belief in its inerrancy.

This seems, however, to contradict the trend detected in the analysis of the questionnaire, namely that where opposition to the divine will is perceived to be linked with a theory of growth of faith, that the theory will be rejected. Yet, as indicated above, the interviews revealed an attitude to stages of growth in faith that were never negative, even among the respondents who were clearly deeply religious. Their degree of religious belief came through very clearly in interviews that involved enough time for this sort of information to emerge.

These interviews revealed much more clearly than did the questionnaires the nuances of belief and small deviances from the norms that the questionnaires had not revealed, and showed very clearly the value of administering interviews side-by-side with questionnaires. This is a point that Cohen and Mannion (1985:79) have emphasised. With respect to the perception that turning points ushered in a changed stage of faith both questionnaires and interviews strongly corroborated each other, as they did in possible the most crucial trend to emerge in this chapter. This is the widely-held perception that the use of a stage theory of growth in faith in certain circumstances is inimical to faithfulness to God and is therefore to be avoided.

#### 7.4 A summary of the analyses of the questionnaires and the interviews.

The conclusion reached in earlier chapters that respondents sometimes viewed a stage theory of faith development as hostile to the divine will is given support in analysing the questionnaires by the large number of high school respondents who were not prepared to comment on whether they could identify turning points in their own lives since, I believe, they viewed the concept with some suspicion. To the direct

question of the possibility of personal faith changes teachers also answered in the main negatively.

Yet, in the value-free environment that was created in the interview situation, many descriptions of changes in belief were given that matched very closely the times and often the substance of the changes that the theory indicates would occur. And the amount of detail that often comprised the descriptions indicated more than a casual dip into the past, indicating that teachers had in fact spent time thinking deeply about what they had been through. In fact many teachers reported intense reflection (the word itself was often used) concerning the changes they were going through. Interest lies in discovering the details of perceptions of personal change, especially since they corroborate the findings of Fowler and others, and in discovering that change is not always away from faith but that it sometimes lies in a deepening of belief. However, the real value of these interviews lies in what they reveal concerning the value attached by interviewees to change within themselves. In no instances did they attach a negative connotation to the process of the personal development of faith, describing it as being no more than a normal part of adult growth. One teacher, in describing himself as "open and flexible enough not to think I've arrived....life is a quest" adequately summarised the views of the other respondents. That they had spent quality time on reflection therefore suggests that they would not be negatively disposed to similar reflection and change taking place in their pupils, so long as it is not perceived as being at odds with the will of the divine. The suspicion with which some respondents to the questionnaire viewed the model was entirely lacking in the interviews.

When in the questionnaire teachers perceived the use of the stage model of faith development to be neutral with regard to the will of God it was viewed positively and is therefore more

likely to be used. In question number 15b. for example, it is teacher training which is suggested as being a possible cause of teachers not being able to use this concept, leaving potential opposition to the divine will completely unreferred to. Since the object of opposition was specified as not being God, both junior and high school respondents perceived themselves as being free to express themselves positively toward a stage theory of faith development. A similar response was given when time constraints were introduced as a factor that could possibly affect its use.

The trend noted in previous chapters concerning the more marked association among junior school teachers of a stage theory of the growth of faith with opposition to the will of God is maintained in this chapter, together with the lesser chance of its incorporation into their teaching. They were also significantly less positive about their personal freedom in the face of the omnipotence of God, from which one can infer that they believed their pupils' lives and faith development to be as controlled as were their own lives.

A point that needs to be borne in mind, however, is that the connection that is being drawn between self perception and attitude to others depends on whether these teachers are able to apply information and attitude from one sphere of their knowledge to another. The question being asked is whether or not they are able to imagine that attitudes that they themselves have can exist also in the pupils they teach, bearing in mind Bloom's (1956) contention that application is a high order cognitive skill and therefore not often attained by the majority of people. The success with which teachers are able to transfer information between themselves and their pupils also depends on whether or not they are prepared to accept the possibility of an experience that they as adults have had as being capable of replication in children, who, in most other respects, especially the cognitive, are less well

developed than they are. This was suggested by the one respondent in this chapter who compared her perceived former immaturity with the present immaturity of her pupils, and by the many descriptions in the two previous chapters of immature and inadequate thinking by pupils.

Having dealt in this and the previous two chapters with those factors which are believed to influence most powerfully teachers' attitudes and use of the model of growth of faith that is informing this study, the last chapter will attempt to summarize these influences and to relate them to the teaching of RE. The trends revealed by answers to the questionnaires and the interviews will serve as a guide in the making of recommendations concerning the teaching of the subject. These recommendations will also be informed by the child-centred approach, one of the two approaches to the teaching of the subject which was dealt with in earlier chapters. Teaching which is guided by the child-centred approach will be shown generally to be more effective than the Bible-centred approach to RE. A stage model of changes in faith can also easily be incorporated into such a methodology.

## CHAPTER 8

### 8. Applying the model and the data to religious education.

#### 8.1 Introduction.

I will attempt in this concluding chapter to point the way forward for RE by suggesting some solutions to what are considered to be the main problems revealed by the data. These problems are:

- a. the perception that in certain circumstances a stage theory of the growth of faith is inimical to the divine will;
- b. occasionally, the lesser effect of educational influences vis-a-vis their personal religious beliefs on the way teachers teach. In this regard the lack of familiarity and possible suspicion with which the model of stages of faith is perceived appears to have contributed to its lack of use; with this is associated
- c. a dual approach to teaching that differentiates between religious and non religious lessons;
- d. teachers' lack of reflection on some parts of their RE teaching, with a probable lack of progress in performance;
- e. the less accurate and more incorrect analyses of pupil development displayed by junior school teachers;
- f. the lack of direction perceived to have been given by tertiary institutions in the education of RE teachers.

The solutions that will be proposed are based partly on an application of relevant parts of the model under review to teaching and partly by an explanation of how child-centred teaching, which was mentioned in an earlier chapter, can further the cause of good RE. I will show how child-centred education is more likely than the more traditional Bible-centred approach to result in more effective teaching than has been the case in the past. It will be argued that were this approach to be more widely employed than answers to the questionnaire suggests has been the case, then the subject stands a better chance of being given recognition by education planners since it is more likely to be seen to be founded on sound educational principles. This is particularly true if it is realised, as will be shown shortly, that a faith stage model can form an integral part of the child-centred approach. The above aims will be developed in the light of the most important trends that have been revealed by the data.

## 8.2 Solutions to the problems revealed by the data.

Various authors in the field of RE such as Hough (1986) and Roux (1994), and others writing in related disciplines such as Berger (1973) and of course Fowler believe that meaning or faith-making is part of the normal growth of the individual and, where such an individual is a child, that such faith-making should be facilitated by normal educational processes. If religious awareness can be allowed to develop as naturally and spontaneously as possible and be related to the general development of children, Hough (1986:19) believes they will not perceive it to be artificial or isolated from the rest of their lives. The result would then be that a growth of belief of some sort will be perceived by them as being quite normal and acceptable. Concurring with the view that children do not find it unusual to have a religious belief one of the interviewees reported what he described as a "wealth of spirituality" in the pupils he taught and a willingness by

them to participate fully in the RE programme on the basis, he believed, of his acceptance of their sometimes "bizarre" religious interests. This teacher believes that he is tapping into an inherent or natural interest in the life of belief, a point also made elsewhere in this study. Taught like this RE will not be perceived as being forced. If the subject is not perceived as being artificially imposed then whatever changes or new beliefs that are incorporated are less likely to be short-lived and stand a better chance of being "taken" with the child into the future. Lasting faith cannot be acquired passively. I believe that the acceptance of the normality of meaning-making will be facilitated still further if those in the RE classroom who do not consider themselves to be involved in religious meaning-making are shown that they too are involved in an activity that is not that different in process from those who practice the religious variety of it.

Goldman is another author who believes that faith-making is more likely to continue if it is experienced as part of acceptable, general growth and not part of a childish, religious phase that must be jettisoned as soon as mature understanding is reached (1965:11). This means, among other things, that the teacher must exercise much greater discrimination in the choice of the language, content and methodology of lessons, to reflect increasing conceptual ability and wider experience. At the same time they must not teach above the child's ability, especially where content is concerned. And there must not be repetition of the same material even if at increasing levels of conceptual difficulty, not because pupils will not understand what they are being taught, but because of the widespread objection by pupils that they have "already done it", the value and the subtlety of higher conceptualization being lost to them, and not without reason. Without attention to making teaching age and faith related teachers can certainly expect a break in the development of faith in the pupils they teach, or it could



even, as Roux (1993) would have it, cause "positive harm" to children in their quest for personal meaning.

Nor must RE be viewed by teachers as something to which the strictures of normal educational desirability do not apply if accepted learning theory has a place where RE is taught. This is a point that appears to have been lost to the many teachers who showed by their answers to the questionnaire to be teaching in different ways in "religious" as opposed to "non religious" classes. This was particularly evident in the different responses to the question of the desirability of using the notion of a stage-like progression of faith when God either was or was not referred to. This was also demonstrated by the large percentage of respondents who indicated that their lack of training in developmental psychological, real though it may have been, was not a hindrance to their using such a model. Nor did a majority of respondents believe that time constraints were a problem, for the same reasons. The reason for such a positive attitude is thought to lie in the absence of a reference to God, an absence which facilitated a positive response since no opposition was seen to exist with Deity.

If RE is to survive on the future educational landscape of South Africa then the dual approach adopted by some teachers in "secular" as opposed to "religious" classes will have to be jettisoned since the secular society that the new South Africa has become admits of no criteria of judgement by which a subject may be included in schools' curricula save educational and social worth. This view has been put forward repeatedly in numerous conferences, committees and workshops with which I have been involved in the past several years. For example such sentiments have been expressed in the RE Syllabus Revision Committee, of which I was a part, that was entrusted by the former Cape Education Department to formulate and refine the RE syllabus that has been put in place in Cape

schools in the past two or three years. The crucial importance of educational criteria has also very frequently been mentioned in the ongoing series of RE workshops and conferences, of which I have been a part since their inception in 1980. My experience, therefore, in interaction with concerned RE teachers has led me to believe that RE will not be judged worthy of retention in the curricula of state schools in this country on the basis of its value in inculcating personal religious belief. However, it should not be judged problematic that teachers are influenced by religious beliefs. The deep concern for their pupils that many religiously-inclined teachers evidenced in the interviews is a direct consequence of their beliefs. What this study has shown, however, is that these beliefs may generate distrust and therefore negate the influence of sound educational principles, including of course a knowledge of a stage-like development of faith. Teachers' frequent matching of pupil behaviour with an inappropriate stage of development is testimony to this. This represents an educational response to a religious problem revealed by the data. A religious response is also possible.

In referring to faith as a response to a source of ultimate meaning teachers cannot ignore the fact that for some of the pupils participating in RE lessons this response is going to be directed to the self-disclosing God of the Bible and Khr'an. Teachers need, therefore, to recognise the place of revelation in the development of religious faith and give it the place in our educational thinking that writers such as Staples (1984) are pressing for it to have. If we define such faith in the Western tradition as an interaction between humanity and a self-disclosing God, then to ignore the changes in men and women that the development of that relationship causes is to exclude one half of such interaction. It is improbable that any relationship stays the same, unless it is purely mechanical, which most religiously-inclined teachers

would claim should not be true of the interaction between God and humanity. Yet teachers who believe it unwise to involve themselves for personal religious reasons in the notion of stages of faith, since they believe only the divine has this knowledge, or who would not rethink their own beliefs, need to remind themselves that in the currently widely-held Arminian understanding of the Bible, emphasis is laid on the individual's response to this self-disclosing God. This understanding of men and women views them as free agents who can accept or reject the divine initiative (John 3:16b). This understanding of the Bible does, however, recognise that the responses of men and women can be helped or hindered. Given the acceptance that various influences play their part in human response to God it should also be accepted that intervention, by, for example teachers, may become necessary. This may be because such responses are inappropriate and need correction, or they may not be progressing and need to be challenged to do so. This represents a religious answer to the religious problem revealed by the data.

Pittenger takes stage advance a step further in seeing an active fostering of growth in the pupil as an important goal of the Christian educator: "Sound education expects and wants the student to change and develop" he writes (1973:311). He follows A. N. Whitehead in explaining that life will be enhanced by the increase in rationality (he makes no mention of affective growth) that Pittenger believes is the most important sign of growth. Chamberlain sees this growth as necessary since it increases the options that will thus become open to the child at a later stage in its life (1989, chapt VI). Fowler also sees growth in a positive light, but he is adamant that no value judgements should be attributed to more "advanced" (a term he eschews) stages of faith. He prefers instead to remind us that some people find equilibrium in an "earlier" stage of faith development than do the majority of their peers; by implication he would therefore appear to be

less than enthusiastic about teachers actively encouraging stage shifts. The reader is reminded of the paradox in Fowler's thinking between his stated belief that following stages are not to be judged superior to the ones they supersede, yet his description of them using words that clearly denote superior forms of coping with reality.

A response to this is to take up Peters' (1972:35) point that one of the major objectives of a modern as opposed to a "traditional" education is to assist in equipping the child with the sorts of knowledge and rational skills so that he or she may independently cope better with whatever they are confronted. This includes, as Ashley (1980:4) and Peters (1972 :35) have pointed out, making sense of the whole of reality, including the meaning environment with which the child will be confronted. This being so one can agree with Pittenger that there is value in actively fostering advances, including stage shifts, if they do enable independent, effective coping skills to develop. Judged on purely educational grounds such a treatment of the subject would, one believes, win support for it from secular educators since it encourages skills that have application outside a particularly religious or even classroom context. It is because they facilitate better coping skills that I disagree with the large number of respondents to the questionnaire who believed that it was undesirable to attempt to identify a stage of faith, and rather to encourage its use among the more than a third of respondents who were undecided about whether to use such a model or not. This is not, however, to confuse what it is exactly we are making a value judgement about, as some respondents may have done. It is the child's coping mechanisms that we should evaluate and not the child itself, even if the child believes he or she is coping quite adequately. Lack of progress in any sphere of development should not detract from the inherent worth of any individual.

However, it is as well to remember that, as noted in chapter one, children, particularly pubescent ones, are as likely to be undergoing stage transition as they are to be in a state of equilibrium. The obvious conclusion for the teacher of RE is to realize that a knowledge of what may trigger and what may retard stage shifts is as important as knowing the characteristics of any particular stage.

Teaching must be developmental and aim at some sort of continuity in the material, in the sense that each stage must build on the degree of understanding, though not a repetition of the narrative of preceding stages. To this the large number of respondents who answered positively concerning the importance of intellectual and general development would no doubt agree; but the negative side of this coin is that it highlights the dichotomy in many teachers' minds between a positive attitude to general development and a negative attitude to the stage development of faith. A stage development of faith would not be seen by these teachers as being synonymous with a deepening of faith, about which they might well have proved to be positive.

If it is accepted that a stage development of faith is to be encouraged, then problems that may arise in each stage must be addressed if the pupil is to develop to the next stage of faith and not jettison the entire process of growth of faith or, more likely, choose as object of commitment something less worthy but more popular such as hedonism. Apart from its inherent selfishness, another reason why this particular object of ultimate concern is thought of as being less worthy is the fact that it is usually an implicit belief and as such is unlikely to be subject to the sort of revision and advance that may well come with examination. And if unexamined, it is typical of stage two faith-making, which, as Fowler has pointed out, is typical of those in the seven to twelve age bracket, whose thinking is less likely to deal adequately with

adult problems. Of course this criticism also applies to individuals who remain inappropriately stuck, given their age, in any stage of what may be considered a less worthy object of faith. If this applies to pupils then it applies with greater force to teachers, to whom many pupils look for guidance. Though almost a third of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they would not rethink their beliefs in response to pupil dissatisfaction, it is heartening that a majority equated change with growth and did not equate it with a wavering faith. The fact that a majority of respondents, albeit not a large one, believed themselves to be in control of their own destinies is also encouraging since it suggests a recognition that both they and their pupils can act side-by-side with any divine initiative, where such a religious belief exists.

If successful advances are to be made to a more comprehensive, more inclusive and more satisfying type of faith-making (Fowler's terms) then the problems which may retard or cause the abandonment of this growth must be successfully dealt with, according to Fowler. The paradox of the need to foster growth on the one hand, and Fowler's insistence that a later stage is not better than a previous one on the other, presents itself once again.

Problems in the life of the growing child that are likely to present themselves include, amongst many others, a questioning of beliefs that may come as a result of perceived hypocrisy by respected adults in the faith, or new and unassimilated teaching by respected sources that conflict with earlier beliefs. Or it may come as a result of trauma such as a divorce or bereavement, the two that were frequently mentioned in the interviews. Whatever its source, hurt and misunderstanding must be dealt with before the child can proceed to a following stage to prevent a break or stagnation

in development, or an abandonment of the road of faith in favour of the pursuit of nihilism or hedonism.

For the teacher of RE to use the model being dealt with effectively the teacher must have a solid knowledge base at hand. Development in religious thinking as defined cognitively by Goldman, takes place most successfully where there is knowledge and experience on which to build, a point that applies to any type of meaning making since such development, as defined by most of the cognitive theorists, involves the reorganization of existing knowledge into new forms (Lawson 1982, Bruner 1966, Moreira and Santos 1981). Usually this comes as a result of some external stimulus. Kili (1988) has pointed out that it is by looking at the successes and failures of Biblical characters that teachers are able to help pupils to achieve insight into their own problems and the ways they may be solved. By doing this knowledge and experience, though the experience may be vicarious, can be combined.

The final answer being suggested to problems teachers of RE may encounter is to urge an acceptance of age-appropriate thinking. We should not be as concerned with conceptual misapprehension and literalisms, or anthropomorphic images of God, if we are working in a theistic context, unless we permit such lack of true understanding to persist into a stage when it is no longer appropriate. There needs to be an appreciation of what is and what is not appropriate thinking. For a six-year old to believe, as Penny (1970:13) has reported, that the Bible came to be written because "God did it, on his typewriter" is a challenge to the teacher to help the child to progress to a better understanding of God rather than a signal to throw up metaphorical hands in horror and attempt to teach immediately, in its fullness, the concept that God is Spirit. It should be entirely acceptable to teachers that children of that age think concretely and have

anthropomorphic concepts of God. Roux (1993) cautions us though not to overlook the capacity in pre-pubescent children to think conceptually, though admittedly at a low level of difficulty and abstraction as defined by Bloom in his Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (1956). In this respect she is in agreement with Watson and Brunner's beliefs mentioned earlier that with sufficient exposure to appropriate language and familiar experiences children can think conceptually at an earlier age than Goldman, for instance, believes.

### 8.3 Evaluating child-and Bible-centred RE.

#### 9.3.1 Child-centred RE.

The term "child-centred education" is one that encapsulates much of the thought that writers such as Dewey (1973:49) and Chamberlain (1989, chapt II) and Peters (1972:35) more recently have sought to communicate. Hull's (1984:150) definition captures its spirit most succinctly: "Child-centred education can, in the first place, be a method of teaching in which the child's activities are encouraged, his participation aroused, and in which the child is encouraged to find things out for himself instead of simply being told by the teacher. Such a method of teaching might be termed a 'discovery method'". It is successful, he writes, simply because children learn better when they find things out for themselves, discovering the internal logic and the interrelationships that exist within what may have been hitherto structureless information. Biggs' (1965) "structured" learning and Ausubel's (1971) "meaningful" learning describe a similar process from the perspective of cognitive learning theory, with added insight into the way the assimilation of new information into existing cognitive structures may be facilitated. All agree that it is the opposite of rote learning. As Piaget and others have pointed out, it is only when an individual is able to modify information without it



losing its meaning, or when new meaning is created out of the reformulation of old information, that true understanding has taken place. Child-centred education can also refer to a method of teaching in which the experience of the child is explicitly related to the material being covered, so that the two illuminate each other, encouraging learning by making the material that it is being dealt with existentially relevant to the child. There is a considerable field of research and published material on which child-centred education is based, such as is seen in the work of Perry & Peters (in Archambault:1965) and Cremin (1961).

Goldman's (1965, 1966) writings were one of the first to summarise and give structure to the views of child-centred religious educationists. In accepting one of its central tenets, that pre-pubescent children frequently distort Biblical meaning, we can understand Goldman's (1965:7) claim that the Bible as a whole is not a children's book, even though we may maintain that there are many stories that young children can understand. This being so teachers who are working in a theistic or religious context do well to heed his plea for a change in Religious Education from being Bible-centred to being pupil-centred. By this he does not mean abandoning the Bible in the classroom nor questioning its authority, as writers such as Staples (1984:46) imply. Instead a child-centred approach starts with the needs and capabilities of children and then chooses those stories and truths that are rooted in the child's experience and mental capacity, or which can be shown to be closely related to them without a forced application. This is a view with which Watson (1987) concurs. Fowler would of course add that it needs to be related to the child's stage of faith. John Dewey (1973:6) was making the same point more than ninety years ago. Many adults, he maintained, treated children as if they were merely "abbreviated adults, unlikeness being emphasized only on the side of strength and power". Without making the

extravagant claim that it is only stage-aware education that can do this adequately, a teacher who is working with such a model of growth as an educational tool has a useful resource to aid him or her in developing sound child-centred education.

It is appropriate to reiterate at this point that the repeated transmission of large doses of adult content taught in a way that violates the child's capabilities and strikes no chords in his or her experience, Biblically founded though it may be, does not equal good RE. As Goldman (1965:7-8) explains: "At this level religious education is reduced to conditioning, for by constant familiarity with certain stories we hope that suitable associations will be built up, much as Pavlov taught his dogs to salivate at the sound of a bell. Conditioning is not education....it is a poor foundation for a belief capable of growing to maturity". For teachers who realize that their pupils will develop, whether for good or ill and whether they plan it or not, that last sentence is especially crucial if they wish to establish a base of belief from which positive further growth is likely. Children (and adults) will most readily develop along lines to which they believe they have staked a personal claim. The staking of that claim is facilitated by information being understood and by its being perceived as being relevant to them personally.

Silberman (1970:215), referring to Piaget's explanation of how cognitive advances occur, believes that if RE is taught in this way the child becomes the principle agent in his own intellectual development. Emling (1974:65) concurs; he believes that self-activity is the "single most important element" in the child's adaptive process. By this he means, using Piagetian terminology, the process whereby the child assimilates and accommodates the work of the class, which is perceived as reflecting reality. And from the perspective of process thought Teilhard de Chardin (1964:26-38) defines the best education in general and RE in particular not as the

imparting of static content but as an activity in which pupils willingly take a part in their own growth, specifically a growth in consciousness.

Pittenger believes that all our teaching endeavours have value only as they are taught "for life". Tillich (1959:159) puts it this way: "In speaking of God and the Christ and the Church, or of sin and salvation and the Kingdom of God, religious education mediates a material which cannot be received by the mind of those asking the questions to which these words give answers. . . . Therefore, every religious educator must try to find the existentially important questions which are alive in the hearts and minds of their pupils". As will be seen later in this study Tillich may have been going too far to claim that children cannot receive the material he mentions because of his suggestion of cognitive inadequacy but the thrust of his argument remains valid. Hamilton (1960) urges teachers to remember that for children to accept what they teach they the children must recognise in the world of their everyday lives the truth of what they are being taught.

Peters (1972:35-36) agrees with the emphasis on methodology when he maintains that it is "manner not matter" of education that is important. Included in this manner, he goes on to write, is for the teacher to be required to have, among other attributes, a knowledge of the stages of development of the child.

The sort of growth that child-centred education is seeking to facilitate is not merely an ability to conceptualize at a higher level of abstraction, but rather a creative self-reflection that is intensified by interpersonal relations, giving the affective domain its rightful place in the growth of the child, a truth to which Fowler and others have pointed us. The value of the social domain too is given recognition by adopting the child-centred approach. Karstaedt (1988:24),

borrowing current political terminology, believes the classroom should function as a "moratorium", as a place where all views are tolerated and their merits and demerits examined. This means that learning comes by way of other children in the class, as well as from the teacher and as a result of self discovery.

This is not to suggest, Hokenson warns us, that teachers are to relinquish all leadership in the educational process to the child, but rather that it should become a cooperative enterprise in which the learner is actively allowed to exercise his own "expressive, explorative, assimilative apparatus" (1973:603). The teacher's role would be to enhance the dialogue between the child's own universe of concern and the principles towards which the teacher would point the pupil; in making these value judgements the teacher therefore assumes a vital leadership role in the pedagogic process. He would do this by posing organising suggestions when distractions occur to bring coherence to the lesson, by inviting suggestions from all members of the class to ensure a balanced assessment of whatever issue is being dealt with (the teacher would make these suggestions himself in the absence of balancing views from the class), periodically summarize progress in the debate, present an overview (Hokenson aptly describes this as a "periscope") and suggest solutions to contentious issues. In a religious context the sacred literature of the faith grouping involved would be appealed to. By doing the above the teacher would in Piagetian terms be assisting the pupils to assimilate their experiences and to accommodate to them.

Further to counter the criticism that a child-centred approach may leave the pupil without adequate guidance, Chamberlain (1989:123) adds a further important justification for the necessity of the teacher actively assuming a leadership role. This is to prevent the pupil damaging him or herself in the

present or the future through a lack of knowledge of the consequences of an action which may be self-initiated or stimulated by often malignant outside forces, called "hidden persuaders" by the Newsom Report. Chamberlain counters the potential criticism that such intervention by the teacher infringes the rights and freedom of the child by describing its motivation at its best as being directed toward the enlargement of the future freedom of the child not only by providing protection in the present as described above but by preparing him or her with the ability to take up options in the future they would not have thought of while younger.

When teaching with a child-centred approach the teacher ceases to look down on the child as an essentially passive recipient of what may be essentially adult values but rather as co-participants in the pedagogic process. Dewey (1903:7) has reminded us that the teacher's job in an RE class lies in "bringing the child to appreciate the truly religious aspects of his own growing life, not of inoculating him externally with beliefs and emotions which adults happen to have found serviceable to themselves". He has gone on to explain that they are not serviceable to children, and they are inoculated from them because such beliefs are frequently the result of aspirations, struggles and failures which only the mature adult can have experienced.

Dewey has pointed out that this is entirely in line with the teaching of the New Testament, quoting 1 Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child I spoke as a child; I understood-or looked at things-as as child; I thought-or reasoned about things-as a child". He believes that this is to return to the ideas of Jesus, "of the successive stages through which the seed passes into the blade and then into the ripening grain", which are differences of quality, not merely differences of capacity. "Germinating seeds are not miniature fruit reduced in bulk", he has cogently written (1973:8). This of course is contrary

to Fowler's view that no value judgements be assigned to any particular stage.

### 8.3.2 A critique of child-centred teaching: Bible-centred RE as an alternative approach.

The child-centred approach has come in for criticism from, among others, HE Staples (1984:42-45), who identifies himself with the "confessionist" approach to Christian RE and those who espouse this orientation. Since I believe many of the points he makes in his M Ed thesis accurately reflect the views of the large number of authors who Staples believes share this approach, a critique of Staples should be seen as a critique also of the viewpoint he claims to represent. This approach is in many ways synonymous with the Bible-centred approach which is in itself similar to Christian National Education in its emphasis on the transfer of what is considered to be correct information and the lesser consideration given to the needs and abilities of pupils at any stage of their school careers. Goldman can also be thought of as being representative of a particular orientation to RE, though his views and those of the many others like him to whom I have referred represent the child-centred approach.

At the heart of the criticism of the child-centred approach lies Staples' (1984:43, 45) belief that an omniscient God can at any time reveal truth to whomever seeks it despite the human limitations of understanding and experience, and that this is done primarily through the Bible. Unstated though implied with this belief is the assumption that the more the Bible is exposed to children the greater will be the chance that meaningful assimilation will occur, that the child will believe what is written, and so come to personal faith. Peters (1972:35) describes an emphasis on content or the process whereby the structures of the mind are filled with what are considered valuable items as "traditional" education.

Penny (1971:9-27) has pointed out that religious educationists such as Goldman, Cox, Loukes, Hyde and Alves have found that RE teachers holding to this approach place a major emphasis on Biblical content.

Hull (1984:155) defines Bible-centred education as a method of teaching in which "the objective is to study the Bible itself for its own sake in its own period and culture and without reference to the personal concerns of the pupils", but he believes that this approach is not being true to the nature of the Bible itself. This is because he believes that in the Biblical tradition there is almost no interest shown in the past for its own sake, but only in the past as "offering a dynamic for the present and a hope for the future" (1984:155). He cites the celebration of Passover as an example, in which there is a renewal of the daily covenant between God and his people.

My experience, however, in more than two decades of professional interaction with educationists who I have personally heard identify themselves with this broad approach leads me to believe that this is a misrepresentation of what most of them believe to be important in their teaching. The difference for them does not lie in an avoidance of application but rather in a difference in emphasis in a few other crucial areas. What is closer to the truth is that Bible-centred teaching is an approach which uses the Biblical narrative as a precursor to its application in the lives of children, though frequently in the form of a challenge to Christian commitment, but often without it being related initially in anything but a cursory way to the experience of those being taught. An example of this approach can be found in Lawrence Richards' "Creative Bible Teaching", in which one-and-a-half pages of a two hundred and eighty eight page book are given to a justification for and a means to making the Scriptures relevant to the needs and interests of pupils

(1970:108-109). A significant difference between this approach and the child-centred approach would therefore be the greater amount of time spent on an exposition of Biblical content and less emphasis spent on initially relating this content to pupils' lives.

The logical outcome of this gives rise to the other major difference, which is that far less importance is assigned to discovery learning since the content to be learned, that is the Bible, is held to be much more important than the process by which it is gained. This approach therefore is less concerned to prepare pupils with thinking skills which would enable them to deal with a variety of life situations since the Biblical knowledge they will have gained is believed to do that for them. However, this aspect of Bible-centred RE is scarcely likely to win acceptance for the inclusion of the subject in future curricula by secular educational planners who have only educational criteria before them.

What is being described here is a difference in emphasis, though it seems to the author to be a major difference. Even though Staples (1984:49) reminds us that confessionists should not be thought of as "obscurantist" since they take into account background information to the Bible and require that pupils do self-study and "participate" fully in the lesson. Yet everything in the teaching situation revolves around the transmission of Biblical content, and pupil participation is geared toward learning that content. There is not the emphasis in Staples' written work to suggest that he is taking seriously enough the different needs, interests and capabilities of the children about whom he writes, though to be fair to him this is not the thrust of his M Ed thesis, on which these observations are based.

He considers Goldman to be the architect of what was in the mid 1960's a new approach to the teaching of RE that embodied



the findings of educational research. Staples (1984:45) is critical of Goldman, whom he describes in negative terms as being "neo-confessionist" and as spearheading an approach that is "liberal" in its intention. The tenor of his criticism of Goldman as someone who does not follow a Bible-centred approach is revealed most clearly in his choice of value-laden words, stating that Goldman has been "indicted" for an approach that "tolerates" and is "open-ended to Christianity", and that this "allegation" is correct. Goldman's (Goldman in Staples 1984:45) assertion that he believes, amongst other things that "Christianity should be taught because it is true, because it answers the deepest needs of human nature, and without a knowledge of the love of God and a relationship with Him, men and women will live impoverished lives" is quoted by Staples as proof of Goldman's "open-endedness". I find difficulty in understanding why this aim deserves criticism nor how the quote relates to being "open-ended".

Answers to many of the questions that were put to respondents suggest that a majority favour a Bible-centred approach to RE since they reveal the following characteristics: they are influenced in their teaching more by their obedience to God than by educational factors, if it were possible to separate the two, often by responding differently to the same question according to whether God is mentioned in the question or not; many are influenced by teaching methodology practiced in their places of worship and by the method they believe to be taught by their sacred text. And finally, as has also been stated only those with personal religious beliefs are, in the main, requested to teach this subject.

### 8.3.3 A reply to the critique of the child-centred approach.

The sentiments expressed by Goldman as described earlier in this study concerning the use of the Bible and the central role of Christian studies in RE are not something for which

any Christian religious educator should feel he needs to be indicted. This has become especially true in the climate of religious tolerance in which the country has come to find itself. It also needs to be borne in mind that the multi-faith nature of our classrooms as they are in 1996 was unheard of in 1984 when Staples completed his thesis. These facts being so we are not to count ourselves with those whom the editor of Religious Education (Vol 44 No 2 1986) has described as having ".... apparently so little security in their own faith that they dare not risk pupils hearing about other faiths". One must acknowledge however that Staples (1984:50) does assert of the Evangelical, who would probably practise the Bible-centred approach, that he or she is "[not] afraid of thinking, for he knows that all truth is God's truth and right reason cannot endanger sound faith".

If we are working in a Christian context then many of those who are calling for Christian education based on sound, new didactic principles would no doubt agree with the belief that the Bible is humanity's ultimate source of knowledge about God. So too would Goldman (1965:59), if his assertion that Christianity should be taught "because it is true....and without a knowledge of the love of God....men and women will live impoverished lives" means anything, since no other source other than the Bible gives us a clearer picture of God. And nowhere does Goldman or for that matter many who generally support his viewpoint such as Penny, deny the inspiration or importance of Scripture, as Staples (1984:46) wrongly contends. The whole point of Goldman's (1965:7-8) treatment of the use of the Bible in RE teaching is that it should be carefully used and not discarded, and there is no suggestion in his writing that he questions the authority of Scripture. In fact one often gets the impression when reading what he writes of Goldman that Staples is arguing "past" him without dealing directly or adequately with his specific points, in order to make a point of his own. Meaningful contact is not

made because Staples' (1984:43-45) arguments centre around defending what for him is a correct view of what the Bible is, that it is the inspired, authoritative Word of God. On the other hand Goldman's interest throughout his various writings is in how it should be used. He puts it like this:".... Biblical experiences are fed in sparingly at first, not in increasing quantity but in increasing complexity, so it is a higher quality of thought which is required with increasing years and experience. The language of religion then becomes not a mere religious vocabulary, but the language of the child's experience, and a consistent picture is being built up of religion as relevant and real" (1965:197). Whether Goldman or any other developmentalist espouses a "non-confessionist" or "liberal" approach to Christianity, as Staples has labelled them, is not a point at issue in a debate about methodology, which is the whole thrust of Goldman's work. It would, however, have been of vital concern had the debate involved the correctness of one's interpretation of the status of the Bible, which it does not.

An answer to the allegation that Goldman and others like him negate God's power by espousing a "liberal" approach is to state that the call to use the finest scholarship, the best material resources, the most effective methods, including sound developmental theory, or the most gifted teachers at their disposal in no way casts doubt on the omniscience in God, nor on God's power to reveal truth if it is sought. Nowhere in his writings does Goldman question the concept of revelation. However, one recalls the negative reaction and the lack of knowledge of developmental theory by many respondents to the questionnaire, who obviously thought that developmental theory in some way called revelation into question. Thankfully they were not negatively disposed to more general developmental theory. Instead of casting doubt on the power of God the use of the finest scholarship can rather be an outworking of obedience by the Christian educator

to the Biblical injunction to "do everything as unto the Lord". Believing that God can "break in" at any time on their work and touch pupil's lives in ways unforeseen by the teacher in no way absolves the religious educator from planning his or her teaching as if God were not there physically to assist. One can accept the possibility of God's intervention for both pupil and teacher alike and agree with Staples (1984:51) when he maintains that God is "not imprisoned by nature or the laws of nature", including the social laws that describe the development of faith, and still plan meticulously.

Effective planning of strategy and content in RE is, however, only possible if teachers have some knowledge of how children learn best about religion and belief at certain stages in their lives. In the following section a brief outline will be given of Fowler's understanding of the characteristics specifically of the life of belief of children who may be in one of the first three stages of faith. By comparing the results of Fowler's research with their own modes of instruction teachers will be in a position to rectify any deficiencies which may exist in their teaching.

#### 8.4 Belief characteristics of the first three stages of faith.

##### 8.4.1 The intuitive-projective stage.

In the stage of faith which Fowler (1986:52) calls intuitive-projective Hough has described the reaction of pupils to teaching as being characteristically instinctive, impulsive and without adult responsibility. Fowler (1981:123) has pointed out that often the logic that formulates the question is not the same as the logic with which the adult seeks to answer it. Although Roux (1993), Phiri (1993) and Hough (1986:52) believe that there is an intuitive awareness of the divine in this stage, we are not to confuse the endless questions children ask with a belief that they are following a

train of thought. particularly if it is at a high level of abstraction. For children who think concretely, as these do, that is a type of understanding that must not be hurried; we are not to judge children by standards that are beyond their reach. It is thus important that the teacher constantly seeks to clarify the way in which his pupils are interpreting the material being presented to prevent the forming of crippling or destructive ideas and to correct major misinterpretations. To demonstrate how completely an important point may be missed Goldman (1965:44) quotes one child who, after hearing the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son said. "I do think his daddy might have gone with him! The distortion was complete, for instead of hearing the story of a loving father, he had heard the story of a neglectful one". The need gently to correct such gross misconceptions since they can lead to a continuation of infantile conceptualization well into adulthood, and to help the child to increasing insight, are especially crucial if we remember how longlasting the images formed in this stage can be.

At the same time teachers need to accept that an insistence on doctrinal orthodoxy, which is synonymous with conceptual correctness, is too much either to hope or to strive for. Whitehead warns us that it is "death to religion to insist on a premature stage of precision" (1929:42), and Dewey explains why the foisting of adult modes of thought onto children poses a "fundamental danger" to their possible future spiritual development. This comes as a result of the child becoming blasé, the constant familiarity with the outward form of belief and the associated absence of novelty and freshness inducing a distaste for future contact. He believes that new spiritual insights are as important as are any other type of experience. Children put it much more simply when they complain "we've done it!" It also may promote scepticism and doubt. "It is a serious moment" Dewey writes (1903:9). "when an earnest soul wakes up to the fact that it has been

passively accepting and reproducing ideas and feelings which it now recognises are not a vital part of its own being. Losing its hold on the form in which the spiritual truths have been embodied, their very substance seems also to be slipping away". Not only is the particular religion of which the child had been a part called into question, but also the reality of all things which lie beyond the senses, and the child soon slips into living on the plain of superficial interests and the excitements of the moment. Dewey could so easily have been writing of the present time. The danger being described here is the introduction of a form of religion before its deeper significance can be understood. If the growing individual does not enter a crisis of doubt then there is the possibility of constant familiarity with only the form of religion creating a conventionalized experience or even contempt. It may become a matter of conformation rather than of transformation.

Children should be encouraged to express their own understanding of what they are being exposed to in the full knowledge that time is available to correct and refine their misconceptions. The fact that self-discovery is enhanced is another reason for encouraging self-expression, which can, of course, take a verbal form. Hull (1984:161) takes up this point when he suggests that young children should be introduced to religious vocabulary conversationally. This, he maintains, will widen the repertoire of the children, and far from confusing them, this approach encourages delight and curiosity. In fact Watson (1987:160-161) believes that it is precisely in this area of language, and not in the area of conceptual development, that the real value of Goldman's research lies. It is not, she believes, echoing Dewey, the illogicality of children that lead them to form wrong impressions, but their limited experience and limited vocabulary: "If something is really understood", she maintains, "it can be communicated in its essential

simplicity, without distortion, to very young children". And the cognitive theorist Jerome Bruner (1976:413), as noted in Chapter 1, supports Watson's position that it is proficiency in language and not intellectual ability that determines what will be learned.

John Peatling's studies may provide the clue to resolving the impasse that has arisen through different claims for the time of onset of logical thinking by pointing to the importance of experience and the language that accompanies it. Peatling (1973:537-540) confirms, broadly-speaking, Piaget's and Goldman's findings concerning the development of conceptual ability in children and a step-wise progression through periods of relative equilibrium and periods of transition. His American studies of the Episcopal school system, however, show a slightly earlier onset of what he terms the abstract stage, compared to Goldman's findings. If we compare in turn Peatling's results with Laabs' (1975:107-115) findings undertaken in the Lutheran school system we find that there is a lag in the Lutheran system in rates of growth towards the abstract stage. This too may be crucial in resolving different perceptions concerning the onset of logical thinking.

Peatling and Laabs suggest that the difference in the North American studies are due to the fact that the Lutheran system is theologically and Biblically more conservative (1975:109). This has important implications since it reflects the importance of the development of language in that there is less likelihood in the more conservative system of the sort of exposure to the broad range of the media, by which the child is involved vicariously in the experiences of others and the use of language that is appropriate to those experiences. This may be because more conservative parents believe that their children need to be protected from some of the less desirable influences evidenced in the media, particularly the

film industry and television, which use sex and violence indiscriminately for commercial reasons.

A significant difference emerges when the type of children who participated in the North American studies are compared to Goldman's findings. Notwithstanding the difference described above the two school systems from which the samples were taken both represented private schools, even though they were church aided. Such schools charge considerably higher fees than do state schools in the United States. They would therefore have drawn from a more affluent family background than did the schools who participated in Goldman's studies. The children who participated in the North American studies would not only have had greater access to a wider range of the spoken and written word than did Goldman's more general sample, but also a more positive attitude to what may loosely be termed "higher culture" such as literature and the arts. North American children also had greater access to the electronic media and films when compared to British children, particularly the non-Public School British children of the early 1960's with whom Goldman was working. Exposure to language is, therefore, important in any attempt to understand children's ability to think and to make sense of reality, but at the same time Peatling's studies show that cognitive ability is also age related. If it is accepted that cognition is involved in the process of faith-making then the process cannot be understood by reference only to age related cognitive growth or experience of language. Both elements are necessary if one is to reach an understanding of how children make sense of their meaning environment.

In summary we may say that it is the quality rather than the quantity of material with which teachers must concern themselves as they try to help children to find answers to the new questions that thrust themselves upon them. They must be more discriminating in their choice of material and language



and, especially where the Bible or the Khr'an is being used, they must not confuse pupils' familiarity with long passages of holy writ as evidence of insight. Insight results from understanding which is facilitated by identification with the child's own life, and not from rote learning. Teachers of RE should think carefully before aligning themselves with those who believe, as Goldman (1965:7) has pointed out, that "by constant familiarity with certain stories we hope that suitable associations will be built upon ". We should not be putting our trust in a form of religious osmosis by which we hope truths will percolate in time into a pupil's understanding if enough of these truths are given; instead we should be trying to strike a cord in our pupils' understanding which may elicit a response, or, as Ankoviak (1974:50) puts it, "to create moments of awareness in which those who have ears to hear may hear a word that reveals God's action in their lives".

This was the method of instruction employed in Jesus' frequent use of parables, as well as Paul's mention while preaching on Mars Hill of some of the teachings of the poets of Athens (Acts 17:28). Ashby (1985) has pointed out that Paul always employed a different style of teaching when in the synagogues compared to the way he taught outside of them, because in his and Jesus' wisdom they were constantly looking for that one issue that would bridge the interest gap between themselves and their hearers, and so to elicit some response. If no such response is called forth then the information is "barren" or "inert", as Miller so aptly calls it. It is only as knowledge is applied that it is "protected" from becoming inert, and it is only as children sense the importance of what they are learning for their own situation that they will attempt to apply the information they are being taught. Whether or not Miller (1973:319) is right in claiming that "knowledge as such does not have value", what is undeniably true is that teachers need to take great care that their

choice of material, or the way they present it, is not perceived by their pupils to be irrelevant.

In calling for increased discrimination on the part of teachers it is important to remember that the poor conceptual ability of young children has important implications where understanding of space and time is important, for example where resources whose validity at least partly rests on their claim to recount the historical experiences of real people is concerned. The Bible and Khr'an immediately spring to mind. Similarly, to try to explain the geography of the Middle East or the flow of Bible history would be misplaced if presented too early.

As a result of the adventurous spirit that is so typical of this stage and the stimulation and challenge that ever-widening experiences bring many questions present themselves to children. With these questions there comes also the desire for proof that is so prevalent at this stage of the child's life, as well as the development of his critical faculties that are so eager to exploit its absence. For the educator working within a specifically religious tradition this has important implications. Hyde's research reveals that children with a favourable attitude to religion, especially in that crucial period when critical thinking begins, retain this attitude and are more likely to build on existing knowledge and to go on learning, whereas the opposite is no less true. Hyde (1965:92) writes: "So it comes about that critical power may be emotionally oriented against religious belief while the assertions of a popular humanism with its mechanical explanation of life and its rejection of the spiritual is uncritically accepted. Thus a prejudice against religion becomes firmly established....". For the teacher of children in the late intuitive-projective stage the implication is clear: give attitude the place of importance it must have if the child's faith education is to proceed further, rather than

concentrating on doctrine or other types of content to its exclusion. In this respect fun activities outside the RE classroom and even outside the school have a crucial bearing on the way what is taught in the classroom is received. The form these activities take is bounded only by the teacher's inventiveness.

In thinking of the long-lasting nature of the learning that occurs in this stage, and the fact that the child's thinking from a cognitive developmental perspective is "magical", as Fowler (1981: 123) has pointed out, this is the time when, if the context is religion, stories of the miraculous should be given more prominent treatment than at any other time in the life of the child. Given this exposure at a time when the miraculous is more likely than at any other time to be regarded as normal, children stand more of a chance of entering the next stage of faith with at least a neutral or open attitude to the possibility of the miraculous intervention of the divine in human history. If they have not had this sort of exposure their later disinclination to accept the possibility of the miraculous renders them more likely to reject not only the miraculous but perhaps even the whole corpus of holy writ which may accompany stories of the miraculous. This may include teaching about interpersonal values, historical writings and even the very idea of a religious orientation to life. This could happen on the sole but important basis of the rejection of the miraculous.

Children in this stage are not able to synthesize a system of belief but instead combine isolated items from stories and images as their particular culture gives these to them to form what Fowler (1981:128) calls "clusters of associations" by which they understand their beliefs. In a society where the mass media are accessible to children this means that an exposure to religious symbols is almost inevitably followed by meaning construction; Rizzuto (1979) in fact has found in

studies in the USA that "virtually no" child, from whatever background, has not constructed an image of God. Referring to these images and symbols therefore provides the RE teacher with that contact at the pupil-interest level that could prove invaluable not only in the desire to "make contact" with a pupil without a religious background, but is a good teaching strategy for all pupils. It is through responding, by taking to themselves these images of heroism and the triumph of good over evil, that children's own convictions are awakened and shaped. Through his imagination the child responds with "immense" conviction to these images and symbols; they can rightly be termed "gifts" when they are shared by trusted adults who encourage feedback of feeling and discussion of interpretation. Yet the very immensity of this response carries with it a concomitant immensity of danger for children if they are pervasively subjected by less sensitive adults to images of fear and the need to escape from its origin. These images would include, amongst others, the depravity of humanity, of punishment in hell for the unrepentant sinner and of the immanence of the devil. Response to the images conjured up by this kind of preaching can lead, Fowler (1981:132) believes, to fear, rigidity, brutalization and, in later life, to the emergence of a rigid, brittle and authoritarian personality.

Yet, perhaps seemingly paradoxically, teachers should not be afraid to include gruesome or gory details in the Bible stories they tell their pupils. Bettelheim (1977) has pointed out that reference to such details provides an effective way for children to externalize their own anxieties and fears since the sensitive adult will point out that they pose no threat to the child. The apparent paradox of fear that can at the same time be a positive influence is resolved when we realize that in the classroom of the caring, sensitive teacher there is no personal threat but rather an externalization of anxiety that can lead to relief.

Wenar (1971) makes a similar claim for play in general and drama in particular, here seen as parallel endeavours to the assimilation of narrative since it also involves the manipulation of fantasy and symbolism, by referring to its "cathartic" function. Morse and Simmons (1973:69) believe that it does this by providing, in the same way as does narrative, a "refuge" from the tensions of real-life socialisation when perceived threats to the child are included in the play. When children play with a threat it loses its danger since it is under their control. Put more formally the child in this way has distorted reality to fit the needs of the ego. The same is true when the child becomes a role player in play or drama since a threat affects the role player but leaves the child unscathed. Morse and Simmons (1973:70) believe such children are clearly then more likely to be emotionally stable, which in turn contributes to their moral development since freedom from the burden of emotional difficulties allows them to develop their own ideas of what constitutes right and wrong. In Piagetian terms the child in play is unconcerned with accommodating reality, preferring instead to "luxuriate" in what he has assimilated.

Stinnette (1973) believes that shock and recognition are indispensable elements in any learning experience that purports to portray personal reality and that this comes from participation in drama since drama draws participants into self-recognition. "Man as man", Stinnette (1973:711) maintains, "in conscience and in response, is brought into being" through taking on the role of another. With their emphasis on the importance of the development of mutual interpersonal perspective taking as a sign of moral development, both Fowler and Kohlberg would support this claim.

#### 3.4.2 The mythic-literal stage.

In this stage the child's concrete operational thinking will tend to lead him or her to concretize abstract concepts; in a Biblical context for example this will lead the child to imagine that since man is created in God's image God must have a body such as people have and since heaven is "up" astronauts have a better chance of seeing God than ordinary people have. Constant feedback must be elicited from the child to ascertain if the teacher has adequately explained conceptual or "spiritual" truths, or if the child has not quite naturally concretized them and in the process lost their meaning.

The newly acquired empiricist nature of thinking and the energy given to attempts to distinguish between fact and fantasy (1981:135) make this the ideal time to deal with those parts of faith that have to do with the temporal, as Fowler has pointed out. An explanation of the discovery and description of the sacking of a city that are revealed by archaeological ruins provide grist to the mill of child-like attempts to insist on demonstrations of proof. And, since the products of imagination are confined increasingly to the world of play, this same technique can be used to demonstrate that the world of religion need not be part of the world of imagination. This emphasis on a factual approach presented in narrative form links two powerful learning media for the child in a mythic-literal stage of faith, for, as has been explained in chapter 2, learning through the appropriation and retelling of stories, including in drama, is a new, exciting and meaningful experience for the stage two child. It is also the chief means by which children organize meanings into some sort of coherency.

The child in this stage continues to develop his or her understanding of the points of view of others. Morse and Simmons (1973:79) point out that the use of dramatics assist children's development of their capacity to take the

perspective of others by placing them in roles they would not normally think about. They are also able to feel compassion for a humanity they now realize is not free from the frailties they might have wished for it, given the idealistic nature of the mythic-literal child .

Stories that have a special resonance for children are those that tell of the origins of the familial and communal groups to which they belong. These would obviously include religious groups, making stories of the founding of a faith, denomination or local church of interest to the child. This also presents an opportunity to expose the child to a limited extent to the beliefs of others in a non-threatening way since they are not able to draw generalisations from them about a general order of life that may conflict with the beliefs of the group to which they may belong, and we are in any event not dealing primarily here with doctrine or belief. We are dealing rather with stories of people with the same sorts of hopes and fears that they themselves might have had. An approach presented in these terms suggests an opportunity to prevent or at least to retard the development of prejudice against groups with whom the child may not otherwise have been familiar. This process would be facilitated, as Fowler (1981:139) has pointed out, by the child's growth in ability to take the perspective of others. This would equip the child for the first time in his or her life to understand and hopefully to empathize with the difficulties that must have been experienced by, for example, groups of pilgrims of whatever religious persuasion when they arrived in a new frontier country like South Africa.

The belief that divine justice is seen in terms of immanence and strict reciprocity, according to Fowler (1981:142), can be used further to encourage respect and empathy for those outside one's group. In a religious context this type of justice is characterized by God invariably rewarding the

virtuous and punishing the wicked. If teachers care to include prejudice among wicked acts that violate God's law of love, prejudice being defined as an uninformed dislike of whole groups, then one can expect children who believe in a theistic God to modify their thoughts and behaviour in the light of this perception of the way God acts towards everyone. While it is appropriate to teach the notion of divine justice teachers must at the same time beware, however, that they do not inculcate in pupils an abasing sense of badness that is constantly looking for the approval of others to overcome it.

#### 8.4.3 The synthetic-conventional stage.

In the synthetic-conventional stage the children's space-time conceptual ability enables them more easily to conceive of a God who is wholly other. This applies not only to God but to other truths as well. The need for positive feedback from trusted others, not only adults but including them, that serves to confirm for the child his developing sense of worth may lead, if the child is fortunate, to the emergence of the first experience of adolescent friendship outside the family. In the ongoing association of such a relationship the individual is affirmed as someone of unconditional worth. Obviously such a person would have immense influence over the one affirmed; this presents a clear opportunity to the teacher to place him or herself in the position of trusted friend, with all the opportunities that this allows-but also all the dangers. For it is only as one who is in a position to affirm the worth of a child that the teacher finds him- or herself in a position of power at this time in the child's development. He is not, by-and-large one who, especially in the early years of this stage, is the bearer of absolute or even relative truth concerning the content of his lessons or life in general. And the relativeness of his opinions becomes even greater as the child enters the last few years of high school. A teacher who cannot accept this distinction between what he



is and what he is not able to do might find himself in the position of disappointed surrogate father and react in ways that do everyone concerned a disservice, and that may render invalid the norms and values he hopes the child will accept as his own. A teacher who will avoid this trap is one who remembers that a part of unconditional affirmation of the child is an acceptance that he may decide not to believe in the truth to which the teacher points. Fowler (1981:153) believes that when adolescents have a conversion experience the God to whom they commit themselves is most often one who they perceive as knowing and accepting them unconditionally and who therefore serves as a guarantor of the forming image of the self. The implication for a teacher of RE who wishes to stand in place of God is clear, hard though it may be unconditionally to accept a pupil who differs fundamentally from the teacher in so important a field as personal morality or belief, especially where this is religious. Many religious people have too much emotional investment in their faith for this process to be anything but difficult.

But not only is there a "hunger" (Fowler's term) for a God who affirms the individual unconditionally but there is at the same time a recomposition of the image of God, where God still remains central. God is now perceived as having the same inexhaustible depths and subtle nuances of personality Fowler (1981:153) believes, that mutual interpersonal perspective taking empowers the child to perceive in others. This is the time when God becomes personal in the sense of being more human, rather than a benign giant. Again one sees in this an opportunity for the RE teacher to begin to share something of the depths of his or her own personality as a representative of God, in so doing giving to God a more human face than the child might otherwise enjoy.

Despite the strong feeling that most teenagers have that it is they who make choices and that commitments are their own,

Fowler (1981:154) believes that authority is located externally to the self, that teenagers values and beliefs, mediated by significant adults, have actually chosen them. What they have done is to clarify and ratify these influences. The external nature of authority reminds us of the power that can still be exerted, even in the high school, by many teachers. This being so, and given the fact that stage theory alerts teachers to the reality of change in many of their pupils, changes they themselves in all probability have gone through and may still in the future experience, a strategy that would serve them and their pupils well is to be more tentative in their presentation of what they perceive to be truth, and not to be afraid to admit to being uncertain. This is also in line with what was said above concerning the desirability of demonstrating the complexity of human and, by extension, Godly character. For the theist this would of course exclude the possibility of error in the Divine. Yet this is not to deny that there does exist, in Christ for the Christian (see John 14:6), one absolute truth, and there is furthermore no logical reason why there should not be such a truth, but it is rather a recognition that "Now we see as through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

A danger exists for the teenager who lives in a culture where theism is by-and-large accepted, if only intellectually. It is that a failure to distinguish between, on the one hand, the absolute nature of God and, on the other, the possibility of one's perception of god being flawed, renders less likely a commitment to a God who may thus be perceived as changeable and undependable. Without this commitment the powerful ordering of a teenager's identity and values outlook that often comes with it may be lost. A stable unifying force, with healthy flexibility, is so important at this time, the teenager's life being otherwise in such a state of flux. The teacher can maintain this flexibility by encouraging his

students to find out more concerning their faith and that of others, and share something of his own faith pilgrimage.

In this regard he may want to explain how he and other older people have arrived at their present position, in other words, to make explicit the nature of a gradually evolving faith, so as to allow those pupils who feel themselves ready for the transition to a stage four type of faith making to begin the process of reflecting on their beliefs and constructing a system of faith, rather than relying on a loose aggregation of unconnected beliefs. At the same time we should ally ourselves unambiguously with Fowler's injunction not to associate a positive value judgement with this or any other stage shift, remembering that many adults find equilibrium in stage three (1981:162). We should especially refrain from attempting to demythologize the symbols through which a teenager in this stage expresses meaning. Teachers need to realize that the symbols that express faith are "organically and irreplaceably" tied to the full meanings of their value systems, in other words, they are regarded as being intrinsically part of the object of belief, if not the same as the very object itself. The symbols themselves, and not just the meaning they represent, are held sacred, so that if a symbol is debunked, the very divine it represents is emptied of meaning.

Hull reminds us how de-theologized adults may unconsciously arrest the growth of religious awareness in children, especially their understanding of God, by using the name of God as an expletive or in fun, for example, or by describing Him as an old man with a white beard who makes flowers grow. "What we find" writes Hull (1984:161), "in this repertoire of child-like religiosity is very little intrinsic to childhood but a great deal which indicates the puerilization of adult religious life". Many adults have but at best an incomplete understanding of religious beliefs and use technical language

which they do not really understand. The best course of action open to them is to admit that in the heart of religion humanity is frequently confronted with a mysterious transcendence that is precisely that, something which is beyond human understanding. Children can accept this easily but adults frequently cannot, having been conditioned to believe that adults ought in principle to be able to understand everything. If, on the other hand an adult does not believe something to be true, then Watson (1987:164) believes that to withhold that information from the child is "indoctrination by omission" if the adult knows that many reasonable people do in fact believe it to be true.

#### 8.5 Concluding remarks.

Teachers of RE at the present time in South Africa face tremendous challenges. Many who are deeply religious are bewildered by the daily changes with which they are being confronted. In the social sphere the liberalization of society has meant that values and beliefs with which many teachers and children have grown up with no longer are accepted to the extent they were, if they are held at all. This means that it is no longer possible to make various assumptions about communalities of belief and to plan according to those assumptions. This causes uncertainty and stress since the sensitive teacher is aware of causing hurt through his or her own ignorance of what may be the cherished beliefs of those they teach. Deeply religious teachers, particularly if they are of the Christian faith, are also hurting as the demands on them to teach a multi-faith RE are often perceived as being a betrayal of faithful commitment to the one true faith as they see it. Of course the composition of RE classes has changed markedly in the last few years, and the multi-faith nature of most South African classrooms too has required adjustment and even caused anguish to some as radically different points of view to their own become freely

aired. Uncertainty and stress also comes from the fact that new teaching strategies such as the one that has been proposed in this study are new and may be founded on principles that would seem at first glance to be inimical to aspects of the faith with which many teachers have grown up. Furthermore the new approach to Bible usage, such as described in the child-centred approach, will also pose a threat to some teachers since it may be viewed as calling into doubt the Bible's very status. The different ways in which teachers conduct themselves in "religious" as opposed to non-religious classes has shown that many teachers are sensitive to issues they identify as being in conflict with the will of the divine, even if this is not actually the case. Working through these issues will and has involved pain. But, if these new techniques can be accepted for what they are, that is, as a methodology that need not conflict with the divine will, then the rewards will be more effective teaching that will accomplish what most RE teachers want anyway.

Then there is the added stress factor that will accompany the increased amount of research that must inevitably accompany effective teaching in a multi-faith classroom environment, accompanied as it will be in the next several years by decreasing numbers of teachers in many schools and increasing sizes of class. With salaries not what they should be the pressures on teachers are enormous.

If anything can make the life of RE teachers easier, more fulfilling professionally and less threatening personally then it must be done. If this study has succeeded in taking some of the sting out of what is new in RE and if the proposed methodology is able to give the subject a higher academic status and so enhance the way RE teachers are regarded, then this study has achieved a worthwhile aim. It will be even more worthwhile if pupils perceive the subject and the God

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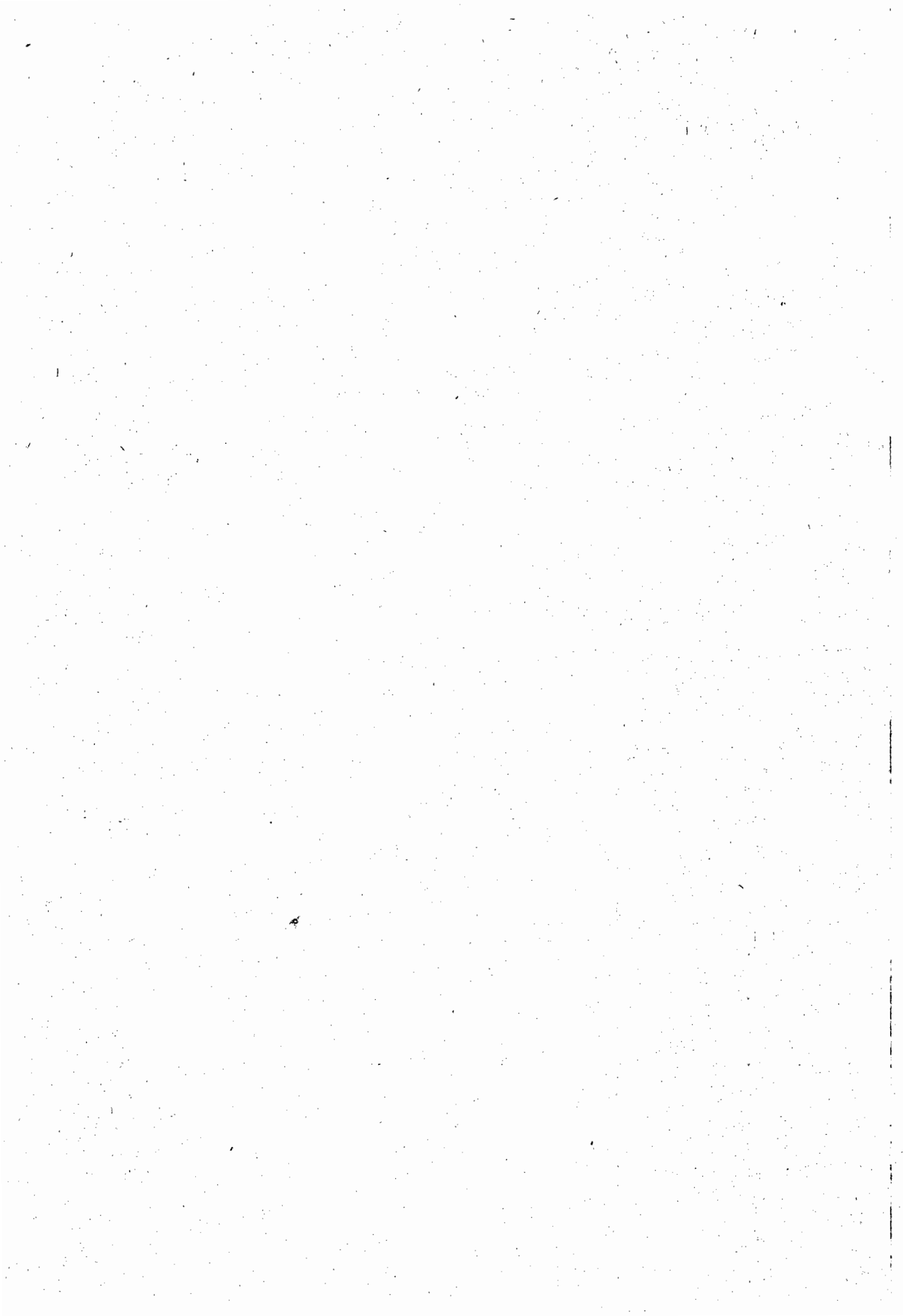
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.....

25. Tick your response to the following statement: "We, as individuals or as a species, are GOVERNED in our lives by a POWER outside us, including environment, that renders us MOSTLY POWERLESS in directing the course our lives will take."

strongly! | agree! | neutral! | disagree! | strongly!  
agree | disagree

Comments.....

26. Tick your response to the following statement: "You should WORRY when your beliefs and values CHANGE over time since it indicates a WAVERING faith

strongly! | agree! | neutral! | disagree! | strongly!  
agree | disagree

Comments.....

.....

27. Tick your response below to the statement which follows. You should WELCOME a CHANGE in your beliefs and values since it could indicate GROWTH.

strongly! | agree! | neutral! | disagree! | strongly!  
agree | disagree

Comments.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS PROJECT. I TRUST YOU HAVE FOUND IT TO BE INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE AND PERHAPS EVEN OF SOME PERSONAL VALUE TO YOU.

statement which corresponds to your answer: TRYING to IDENTIFY the stage of faith your pupils are in is

not called for: only God knows their state of belief.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

impossible since you have never been psychologically trained.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

too time-consuming for the tangible results it achieves.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

undesirable since belief is often a very personal thing.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

needed: to move forward we must know pupils' present levels.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

essential: all teaching should include a developmental aspect.

strongly: | | agree: | | neutral: | | disagree: | | strongly: | |  
agree | | | | | | | | | | disagree

16. Is your teaching significantly AFFECTED by the type of RESPONSE you get from your pupils?

Seldom: | |  
Often: | |

17. The teaching METHODS you use in the classroom to communicate your religious and other strongly-held beliefs are INFLUENCED most closely by

	LOW AGREEMENT	...	HIGH AGREEMENT
obedience to the Bible/Qur'an	11   12   13   14   15		
pressure of other school work	11   12   13   14   15		
a fear of abusing your power	11   12   13   14   15		
every pupil's individuality	11   12   13   14   15		
levels of religious awareness	11   12   13   14   15		
a desire to please the Almighty	11   12   13   14   15		
none of the above or a combination of them: please explain.....			

18. "My teaching would be much more CLOSELY GEARED to my pupils' levels of moral and religious development if I had

	LOW AGREEMENT	HIGH AGREEMENT
more freedom from the syllabus	11   12   13   14   15	
more freedom from my principal	11   12   13   14   15	
proof that it yielded results	11   12   13   14   15	
training in developmental psycho	11   12   13   14   15	
insight that belongs only to God	11   12   13   14   15	

19. Rank in importance the influence on your teaching METHODOLOGY by the methodology employed in SERVICES in your church/synagogue/mosque

LOW INFLUENCE			HIGH INFLUENCE						
111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1

20. Rank in importance the influence on the CONTENT of your teaching by the content taught in SERVICES in your church/synagogue/mosque

LOW INFLUENCE			HIGH INFLUENCE						
111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1

21. Rank in importance the following PUPIL INFLUENCES on you as you TEACH or PREPARE an RE lesson. In general, I am influenced by my pupils'

LOW INFLUENCE			HIGH INFLUENCE		
---------------	--	--	----------------	--	--

chronological age	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
-------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

intellectual age	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

stage of faith	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
----------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

Biblical/Khr'anic knowledge	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
-----------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

their interest	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
----------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

none of the above or a combination of them; please explain.....

22. In general, do your pupils enjoy RE lessons?

Yes! 1

No! 1

Explanation, if needed.....

23. If your answer to the above question is "Yes" skip this question (younger children often enjoy the subject). If it is "no" tick your PUPILS' agreement or disagreement with the following possible REASONS their DISSATISFACTION.

	LOW AGREEMENT			HIGH AGREEMENT		
--	---------------	--	--	----------------	--	--

the Bible contradicts itself	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

it doesn't count for marks	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
----------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

science disproves the Bible/Khr'an	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
------------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

personal problems with teachers	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
---------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

time loss in exam subjects	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
----------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

none of the above or a combination of them; please explain.....

24. How do you actually RESPOND to these problem areas? (not what you should do!) Amongst other things I sometimes

	LOW AGREEMENT			HIGH AGREEMENT		
--	---------------	--	--	----------------	--	--

rethink some of my own beliefs	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
--------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

change my teaching methods	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
----------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

change my lesson content	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
--------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

go to my minister/rabbi/imam	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

feel the need for more training	111	1	121	1	131	1	141	1	151	1
---------------------------------	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---	-----	---

none, or a combination of the above; please explain.....

3. During what phase of schooling do you believe it is appropriate to try to EXPLAIN what the KINGDOM of GOD means?	Pre-Prim.
	Jun.Prim.
	Sen.Prim.
	Jun.Sec.
	Sen.Sec.

9. During what phase of schooling do you believe it is appropriate to PLAN to tell your pupils that parables may NOT represent real events?	Pre-Prim.
	Jun.Prim.
	Sen.Prim.
	Jun.Sec.
	Sen.Sec.

10. During what phase of schooling do you believe it is appropriate to ask your pupils to explain how they would have FELT had they been Peter when the cock crowed?	Pre-Prim.
	Jun.Prim.
	Sen.Prim.
	Jun.Sec.
	Sen.Sec.

11. We can expect the level of INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING as one of the constituents of faith of our pupils to be AGE-RELATED.

strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly
agree				disagree

12. Can you identify any significant TURNING POINTS (apart from conversion) in your own life as you have tried to make sense of your experience?	Yes
Please explain if you can do so.....	No

.....

.....

13. "Such turning points sometimes serve as CATALYSTS that usher in STAGES of faith or belief." Express your response below to this statement.

strongly	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly
agree				disagree

14. Tick the blocks below the numbers which you think would best complete the statement which follows: Trying to DISCOVER what STAGE of faith your pupils are in is

	1	2	3	4	5	
difficult						easy
important						unimportant
impossible						possible
useless						useful
interesting						uninteresting

15. Respond to the following by ticking the block below each

Appendix:the questionnaires.

PLEASE TICK YOUR ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN THE APPROPRIATE BLOCKS PROVIDED.e.g. ! ! , !5! ! or agree! !

YOU MAY FEEL THAT SOMETHING AS SUBTLE AND IMPORTANT AS PERSONAL BELIEF DESERVES MORE THAN SIMPLE ANSWERS.PLEASE ADD AT THE END OF ANY QUESTIO

ANY EXTRA INFORMATION THAT WOULD DO JUSTICE TO WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

1. State the CLASSES to which you	Pre-Prim.	! !
PREDOMINANTLY teach RE.	Jun.Prim.	! !
	Sen.Prim.	! !
	Jun.Sec.	! !
	Sen.Sec.	! !

2. How LONG have you been teaching?	0-5 yrs	! !
(ALL subjects)	6-10 yrs	! !
	11-15 yrs	! !
	16-20 yrs	! !
	21-25 yrs	! !
	over 26yrs	! !

3. Did you OFFER to teach RE or were	Offered	! !
you ASKED to teach the subject?	Asked	! !

4. What would you CHOOSE to do were	Continue to teach	! !
you given the choice,continue	Take a break	! !
to teach RE,take a break or	Stop	! !
stop altogether?		

5. Have you received any INSTRUCTION concerning	Yes	! !
PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT in an RE context	No	! !
by your Education Department or within		
the context of your school?		
If "yes" state approximately how many years ago.....		

6. To what kind of BOOKS do you	novels (fiction)	! !
generally turn when you	autobiographies or	
PREPARE for the classes you	biographies (non-fiction)	! !
predominantly teach?	doctrinal/theological works	! !
	the Bible/Khoran	! !
	educational reference books	! !

7. During what phase of schooling do you	Pre-Prim.	! !
believe pupils are most likely to	Jun.Prim.	! !
IMITATE the most ADMIRER adults	Sen.Prim.	! !
in their lives?	Jun.Sec.	! !
	Sen.Sec.	! !



about whom it often revolves to be worthy of their serious consideration.